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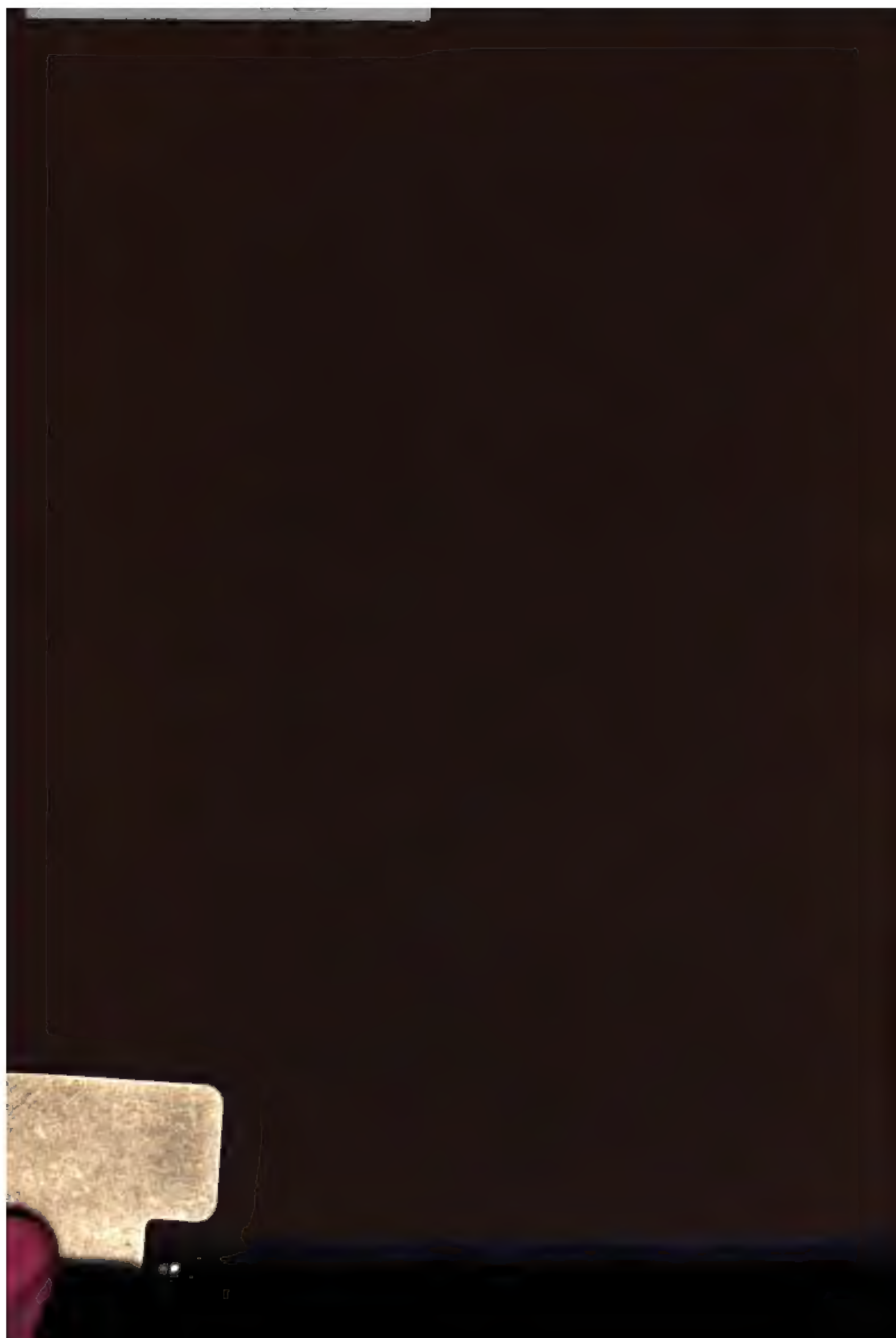
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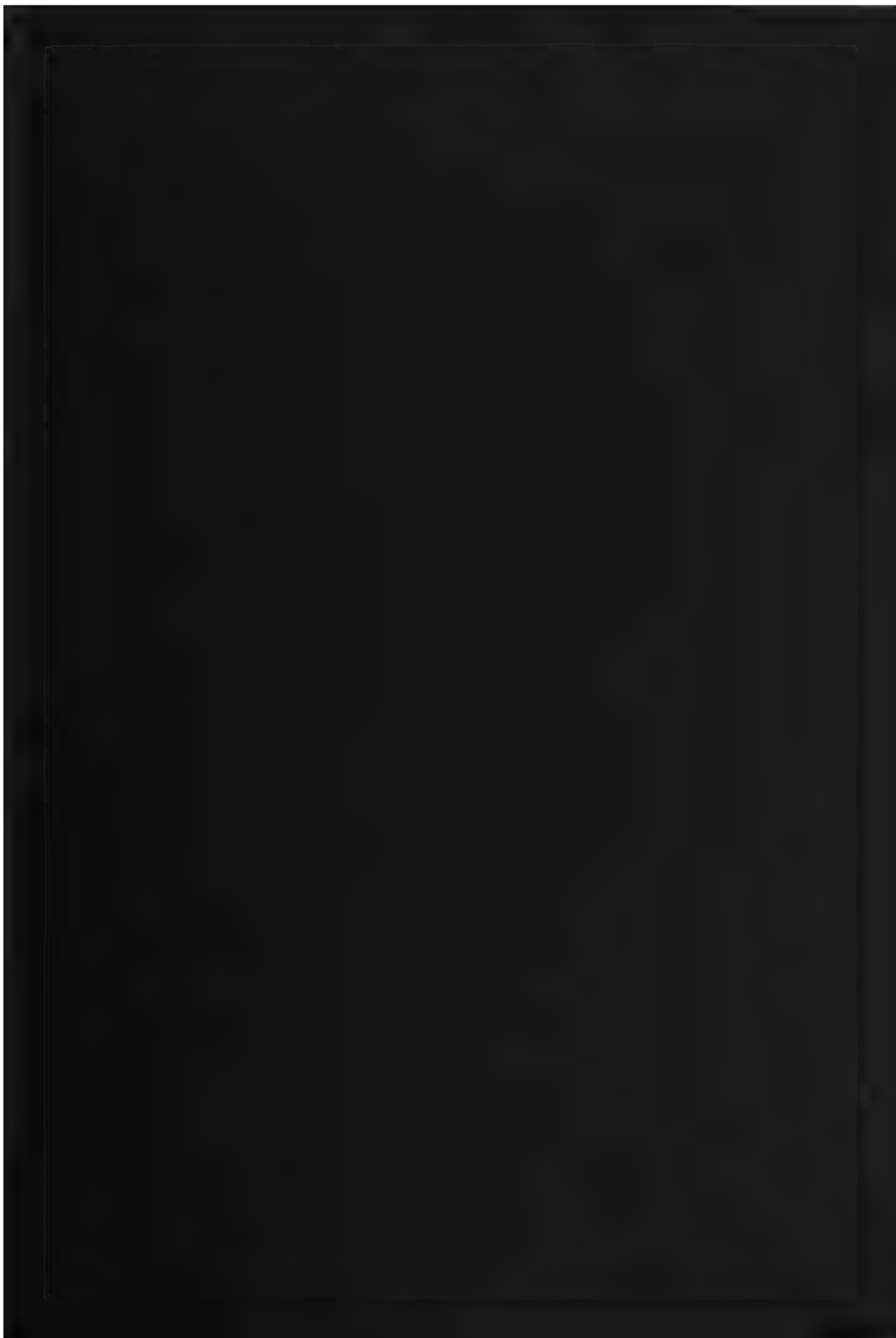
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SHORT READINGS
ON
THE FOUR GOSPELS.

SHORT READINGS
ON
THE FOUR GOSPELS.

FOR THE
Daily Use of Families.

BY
SELINA VISCOUNTESS MILTON.



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PREFACE.

HAVING myself often felt the want of some variety for family Scripture reading, and also the difficulty of finding anything concise enough, and, at the same time, well adapted for such a purpose, I have been tempted to try and arrange, from the works of many eminent Divines, a short explanation of the Gospels, which I have divided into readings for daily use. I hope it may be found useful to some few heads of families; at all events, this occupation has enabled me to fill up many sleepless hours, which otherwise would have been most tedious and wearying during my season of affliction and sorrow; and by pondering upon God's Holy Word, I trust it has been the means of my bearing with greater submission the will of my heavenly Father, and

of preparing me for that blessed change to which I so anxiously look forward.

May the grace of God so rest upon this work that it may bring many others to that happy state, especially my dear children, to whom this is most affectionately dedicated.



THE GOSPEL OF ST. MATTHEW.

MATT. i. 1-17.

THE book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren; and Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram; and Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naason; and Naason begat Salmon; and Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse; and Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias; and Solomon begat Roboam; and Roboam begat Abia; and Abia begat Asa; and Asa begat Josaphat; and Josaphat begat Joram; and Joram begat Ozias; and Ozias begat Joatham; and Joatham begat Achaz; and Achaz begat Ezekias; and Ezekias begat Manasses; and Manasses begat Amon; and Amon begat Josias; and Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon: and after they were brought to Babylon, Jechonias begat Salathiel; and Salathiel begat Zorobabel; and Zorobabel begat Abiud; and Abiud begat Eliakim; and Eliakim begat Azor; and Azor begat Sadoc; and Sadoc begat Achim; and Achim begat Eliud; and Eliud begat Eleazer; and Eleazer begat Matthan; and Matthan begat

Jacob; and Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ. So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David unto the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.

THE writer of this Gospel, St. Matthew, was also called Levi. He was the son of Alpheus, but probably not of that Alpheus who was the father of the Apostle, James the Less. He was a native of Galilee; but it is not known in what city he was born, or to what tribe of the people of Israel he belonged. Although a Jew, he was a publican, or tax-gatherer, under the Romans; and his office seems to have consisted in collecting the customs due upon commodities which were carried, and from persons who passed, over the Lake of Gennesareth. Our Saviour commanded him (as he was sitting at a place where he received these customs) to follow Him. He immediately obeyed, and from that time became a constant attendant on our Saviour, and was appointed one of the twelve Apostles. After the ascension of our Lord, he continued with the other Apostles to preach the Gospel for some time in Judea; but as there is no further account of him in any writer of the first four centuries, we must consider it as uncertain into what country he afterwards went, and likewise in what manner, and at what time, he died. In this genealogy of Jesus Christ, Abraham and David are particularly mentioned as being His ancestors, because to them the promises of the Messiah had been especially made. To Abraham, that of a Son 'in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed;' and to David of a Son whose reign should be eternal. And here we see how our blessed Lord, in submitting to an earthly parentage, disdained not to have reckoned among His ancestors the chief of sinners.

From His condescension let us learn humility ; from His mercy, love towards each other. Let us resolve, after this pattern of His love, to decline neither toil, nor pain, nor shame, in doing good unto mankind ; even as He freely came down from heaven and took on Him the seed of sinners like ourselves, that we might be made the children of grace, and inheritors of everlasting life.

MATT. i. 18–25.

NOW the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise : When as His mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou Son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife : for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus : for He shall save His people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife : and knew her not till she had brought forth her first-born son : and he called His name Jesus.

It will be observed that, according to the chronological notice given in the margin, the birth of our Saviour

The Gospel of

is stated to have taken place 'in the fifth year' before the era which is vulgarly assigned for that event, and from which the dates of our years are usually reckoned. The fact is, that the practice of dating from the birth of Christ did not begin in the early times of Christianity, and was not generally adopted among Christians till about A.D. 730 ; and it is now the universal opinion of learned men that, at its first adoption, an error of about four years was made in fixing the era from which the dates are computed. The miraculous conception of our Lord, here announced, is the foundation of the whole distinction between the character of Christ in the condition of a man, and that of any other prophet. Had it been according to the natural course of things, His intercourse with the Deity would have been of no other kind than the nature of any other man might equally have admitted ; and of no higher kind than the prophets enjoyed when their minds were enlightened by the extraordinary influence of the Holy Spirit. But this miraculous conception confirms the assertion of the Apostle, that 'God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by the Son.' And thus much is plainly signified by His very name, which, according to the prophecy was to be Emmanuel, or God with us ; whereas, the angel bade them call Him Jesus, 'for He shall save His people from their sins.' Hence we learn that 'a Saviour,' and 'God with us,' mean nearly the same thing ; and that the Son of Mary was both at once. For no one less than God was capable of making atonement for the sins of us all. To be a Saviour, therefore, it was necessary to be God with us : to be Jesus, He must needs be at the same time Emmanuel. And the angel and the prophet, though using different words, imply both of them the same thing, 'to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself' (2 Cor. v. 19).

MATT. ii. 1-10.

NOW when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel. Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found Him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship Him also. When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over the place where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

THAT which is here related did not take place immediately after the birth of Jesus, but some little time afterwards. The town of Bethlehem lay to the south of Jerusalem, about six miles off. As it has been all along honoured by Christians of all nations on account of its being our Saviour's birth-place, so at this very day it is generally visited by pilgrims, to whom they pretend to show the very spot where He was born, and the manger in which He was laid. The name of the 'wise men' is in Latin

- *magi*, from whence is derived our English word ‘magician.’ The Magi were a sect of ancient philosophers living in the East, addicted to the study of astronomy and other parts of natural philosophy; they were highly esteemed, having more just sentiments of God and His worship than any of the heathens, for they abhorred the adoration of images, and worshipped one only God: they were therefore evidently the fittest of all the ancient heathens to have the first knowledge of the Son of God, and of the salvation imparted by Him. Probably the star or the light they saw, was of the nature of what the Jews called the Shechinah, or Divine glory. It was perhaps the same ‘glory of the Lord,’ or miraculous light which ‘shone round about the shepherds,’ which may have appeared to the Magi, on the same night, at a great distance, diminished to the size of a star. It was plainly some new appearance, which they, whose profession led them peculiarly to the study of astronomy, had never before observed in the heavens. Thus shall the star which troubled all Jerusalem fill us, as it did these Gentiles, with exceeding great joy. As children of the faith of Abraham let us acknowledge His sovereign right to the best we have to offer. The star which guides us is His word. This let us follow, whithersoever it leads us. Whether to the courts of princes or to the cottage of the poor, whether to abundance or to want, to labour or to rest, to whatever duties or difficulties it points, only let us obey its heavenly direction, and in the end it will bring us to the presence of our Lord.

MATT. ii. 11-23.

AND when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshipped Him: and when they had opened their

treasures, they presented unto Him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way. And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and His mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy Him. When he arose, he took the young child and His mother by night, and departed into Egypt: and was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my Son. Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not. But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, Arise, and take the young child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life. And he arose, and took the young child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee: and he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.

THE behaviour of Herod on this dreadful occasion should caution us to what amazing lengths of sin human beings are capable of advancing, unless they check themselves in time, especially when the love of power and dominion hurries them on. We should also observe how the providence of God overrules the designs of the wicked. Herod destroyed, indeed, those infants whom he would have wished to spare; but that Infant, whom alone he wished to destroy, escaped him. Thus he plunged himself into the deepest guilt, and gave himself up to endless infamy and misery; yet gained not that point at which he aimed. For the providence of God had effectually secured the life of the infant Jesus. The wise men were directed by a heavenly dream to depart into their own country another way. And Joseph was instructed by the same method of revelation, to avoid the indiscriminate fury of Herod, by a private flight into Egypt. Thence in due time, at Herod's death, he returned under the like direction towards Judea; not indeed to dwell at Bethlehem, for fear of Herod's son, then reigning, but at Nazareth, a city of Galilee. So surely does the arm of the Almighty frustrate the malice of wicked men! So vainly do the 'kings of the earth stand up, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His anointed' (Ps. ii. 2).

MATT. iii. 1-6.

IN those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord,

make His paths straight. And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey. Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.

THIS was the time when John the Baptist and Jesus were about to enter on their respective offices. That which is here related occurred nearly thirty years after what was mentioned in the former chapter. The wilderness here described lay along the river Jordan, and on each side of it; whence St. Mark relates, that John baptized, as well as preached, and St. Luke expresses it, that 'he came into all the country about Jordan preaching the baptism of repentance.' For the Baptist was sent by God to prepare and smooth the way before the Messiah, by clearing and removing the various impediments and obstructions which impeded the march of the Gospel, arising from the prejudices, passions, and vices of mankind. His raiment of camel's hair was nothing else than that sackcloth of which we read so much in Scripture. In the East a superior kind of cloth is made of the fine hair of the camel, which is thence called camlet; this is not the kind meant here, but a coarse stuff which is manufactured from the long and shaggy hair of those animals, which was anciently worn by monks and anchorites. It is only when thus understood that the words suit the description here given of John's manner of life. He fed on such simple food as the desert afforded to the lowest of its inhabitants. The abstemiousness and rigour of the Baptist's life was calculated to excite great attention and reverence in the minds of his hearers, and to produce very important effects. It was well suited to the doctrine he was to preach, that of repentance and

contrition, to the seriousness he wished to inspire, and to the terror he was appointed to impress on impenitent offenders. With faith such as he exerted, with repentance such as St. John enjoins, let us daily prepare our hearts for the final coming of our Lord, that so, when He shall purge his floor, we may through His merits and His grace be counted for that good grain, which is to be stored in heaven for ever.

MATT. iii. 7-12.

BUT when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: and think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid at the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire. Whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into His garner: but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

THE Pharisees were a sect among the Jews that had subsisted at least above a century and a half before the appearance of our Saviour. They affected the most profound regard to the law of God, and the sacred books;

but for the interpretation of them, and the manner in which they were to be obeyed, they depended chiefly upon traditional accounts. They seem to have owed the name of their sect to their separating themselves from all other Jews who did not comply with their peculiarities; the word Pharisee being derived from a Hebrew word, signifying to divide or separate.

The Sadducees were the most ancient sect among the Jews, the name being derived either from the Hebrew word *sedec*, signifying justice, or from a certain teacher among the Jews called Sadoc. At the time of our Saviour this sect held doctrines that were thoroughly impious; for they denied the resurrection of the dead, the being of angels, and all existence of the souls of the departed; but at the same time that they held these and other loose opinions, they are said to have had a bigoted attachment to the law of Moses.

The words of St. John the Baptist deserve to be seriously considered, because they contain a clear intimation of our blessed Lord's divine nature and excellencies. The destruction of the Jewish State is also here intimated. By the gathering of the wheat into the garner, it seems to be implied that the believers in Jesus should not be involved in that calamity. For as a tree is known by its fruits, so will our repentance be esteemed, not by tears, and sighs, and professions, but by the change which ensues from evil unto good.

MATT. iii. 13-17.

THEN cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John to be baptized of him. But John forbad Him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest

thou to me? And Jesus answering, said unto him, Suffer it to be so now : for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered Him. And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water : and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him : and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

WHAT an exalted idea does this give us of the dignity and importance of the great Founder of our religion, that He should have in John a forerunner and harbinger to proclaim His approach to the world, and call upon all mankind to attend to Him. It was a distinction peculiar and appropriate to Him. Neither Moses nor any of the prophets can boast this mark of honour. It was reserved for the Son of God, the Messiah, the Redeemer of mankind, and was well suited to the transcendent dignity of His person, and the grandeur of His design. When our Saviour was baptized by John in Jordan, there was a plain manifestation of the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity. For the heavens were opened, and God the Holy Ghost visibly descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon our Lord. Christ, on whom He descended, was praying among the people, and as these two in their bodily shape could not but be seen, so the Third Person, who was not seen, was distinctly heard saying, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' God grant that the fire we have been baptized with, may light up in our minds clear views of Gospel truth, kindle in our hearts a holy flame of spiritual affection, consume all evil thoughts, all fleshly lusts, form like unto itself our earthly nature, and make our reluctant spirits mount upwards, in a life of thankfulness and love.

MATT. iv. 1-4.

THEN was J  sus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He was afterward an hungred. And when the tempter came to Him, he said, If Thou be the Son of God, command these stones to be made bread. But He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

IMMEDIATELY after the baptism of our Lord, in that moment of exaltation when He was acknowledged by a voice from heaven to be the Son of God, Jesus went forth under the guidance of that Spirit, in full confidence of this Divine power, into the wilderness, to encounter the prince of this world. A plain proof that the contest which follows was a preconcerted design, a measure approved by heaven, and subservient to the grand purpose in which our Saviour was engaged, of rescuing mankind from the dominion of Satan. The mountainous desert into which our Saviour was led by the Spirit to be tempted by the devil, is a miserable, dry, barren place, consisting of high, rocky mountains, torn and disordered, as if the earth had suffered some great convulsion in which its very bowels had been turned outwards. On the left hand, looking down into a steep valley, are some ruins of small cells and cottages which were formerly the habitations of hermits, retiring hither for penance and mortification; and, certainly, there could not be found a more comfortless and abandoned place for that purpose. On descending from these hills of desolation into the plain, one reaches the foot of Mount Quarantania, which is said to be the mountain from which the devil tempted our Saviour with that visionary scene of all the

kingdoms and glories of the world. It is, as St. Matthew calls it, 'an exceeding high mountain,' and in its ascent difficult and dangerous. It has a small chapel at the top, and another about half-way up, on a prominent part of a rock. Taking advantage of our Lord being hungred, the devil (who probably assailed him under the disguise of 'an angel of light,' and in a human form) hoped to overcome the second Adam as he had done the first; not knowing that Christ was to be tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin, that He might be able to bear our infirmities, and point out by His own example the dangers to which we are exposed from our spiritual adversary, and also the most effectual mode of resisting him by vigilance, prayer, and the Word of God rightly understood. Let us then derive this lesson from the conduct of our heavenly Teacher, to resist all temptations firmly, by an entire reliance on God's Word, on God's promises, and on God's aid.

MATT. iv. 5-11.

THEN the devil taketh Him up into the holy city, and setteth Him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto Him, If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down: for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee: and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Again, the devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto Him, All these things will I give Thee, if Thou

wilt fall down and worship me. Then said Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt Thou serve. Then the devil leaveth Him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto Him.

OUR Saviour having resisted the tempter's first appeal to the sense of hunger, was far from being disconcerted at his sudden change of purpose: and our Lord's answer instructs us, that as we ought not from distrust to ask new proofs of His power, when we have had sufficient ones already; so neither must we from presumption urge Him to do for us, what we have no need of, and what therefore He has given us no right to expect. This history of our blessed Lord's temptation teaches us, that even the best of men may sometimes be permitted to fall into great temptations; for we see that even He was exposed to the severest. It encourages us to hope, that when temptations assail us, we may be blessed with Divine assistance to save us from the danger; for the great Captain of our salvation, when assaulted by all the art, and all the power of Satan, rose superior to all his efforts. We learn further from our Saviour's conduct under this great trial, that when temptations assail us, we are not to hesitate and deliberate whether we shall give way to them or not, but must at once repel them with firmness and vigour; we must instantly say to the tempter, 'Get thee hence, Satan,' and he will instantly flee from us, as he did from Christ.

Let us believe without presuming, and trust without tempting God; for, behold, angels will come and minister unto us. Let us hope then, if at least we have hope of heaven that to ourselves they are sent. And when we consider that we are 'compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses,' 'Let us run with patience the race that is set before us.'

MATT. iv. 12-25.

NOW when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, He departed into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea-coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephtalim: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephtalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up. From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And He saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed Him. And going on from thence, He saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and He called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed Him. And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. And His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought unto Him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy: and He healed them. And there followed Him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from beyond Jordan.

OUR Saviour's first address to the people is similar to that of the Baptist. The very first qualification He required of those who aspired to be His disciples, was repentance, a sincere contrition for all past offences, and a resolution to renounce in future every species of sin. Had it been the object of our Saviour to establish His religion by mere human means, by influence or force, by the charms of eloquence or the powers of reason, by the example or the authority of the great, He would undoubtedly have selected His disciples from the opulent, the eloquent, or the learned. But these were not the instruments which He intended to use. The fishermen of Galilee were to be, under Him, the means of producing the greatest change that ever took place on this globe. After the example of James and John, the sons of Zebedee, every Christian should be ready in heart and in mind to quit all that comes in competition with his duty, and to follow the Saviour in the path of holy living. Let us not then refuse to sacrifice any employments, however profitable, any ties, however dear, any sins, however habitually indulged, when the word of Christ plainly requires it for His service, and for our eternal good. And whatsoever be the sickness that most affects our souls, whether fleshly lusts, or regard for this world's pomps, let us apply, like the people we here read of, to Him, who, at His first coming, healed thus freely all manner of grievous ailments. Readily we attend to each slight sickness of the body ; and when we are seriously ill, we spare no pains, or cost, or self-restraint, no distant consultation of the most eminent in skill, towards obtaining the recovery of the body. Much more then let us watch anxiously for the health of the spirit within, and in all its infirmities, let us have recourse with faith to the great Physician of souls.

MATT. v. 1-4.

AND seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain : and when He was set, His disciples came unto Him : and He opened His mouth, and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit : for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn : for they shall be comforted.

OUR blessed Lord, having by His miracles established His divine authority, and acquired a powerful influence over the minds of His hearers, now proceeds to explain to them in some degree the nature of His religion, the duties it enjoins, and the dispositions it requires. This He does in the ensuing discourse, which is of considerable length, called His Sermon on the Mount ; which contains a greater variety of new, important, and excellent moral precepts, than is anywhere to be found in the same compass. The manner of our Saviour's teaching was extremely peculiar, yet precisely adapted to the peculiarity of His character and situation. His instructions were conceived in short, emphatic rules, in occasional reflections, or in sound maxims. He produced Himself as a messenger from God, and He put the truth of what He taught on authority. In the very outset of His public instructions, our Lord marks at once, in the strongest and most decided terms, the peculiar temper and character of His religion, by exalting the poor in spirit, and showing His disciples how completely opposite it was to all those splendid and popular qualities, which were the great objects of applause and admiration in the world. His next blessings are bestowed upon those who mourn and endure afflictions of any kind with an humble submission to Divine providence ; but still more blessed are they, if the sorrows and hardships which they

undergo are for the sake of duty and religion. God will then certainly support them under their distress. They shall be comforted by the Holy Ghost, the Comforter; by His aid, by His inspired joy. They shall be comforted by the blessed sentence of that Judge, who was Himself 'a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;' and hereafter they shall rest for ever in those mansions where no sorrow enters.

MATT. v. 5-12.

BLESSED are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

OUR Saviour here declares that the meek shall inherit the greatest blessings upon earth, calmness and composure of spirit, peace and comfort of mind; and those who do hunger and thirst after righteousness, shall enjoy its present and future rewards. The blessing of the merciful is, that they may expect to find that favour and mercy from God which they show to men, and also to experience mercy, forbearance, and kindness from their

fellow-creatures; and the blessing promised to the pure in heart is, that they shall peculiarly enjoy God's favour and protection here, and hereafter shall have a nearer access to His glorious presence, and that fulness of joy which shall attend it. The peacemakers, too, are blessed, for they shall be owned and received by God as His peculiar children; and lastly, there is a blessing, even 'the kingdom of heaven,' for those who are persecuted for 'righteousness' sake; who bear these sufferings with courage and patience, and who, notwithstanding the persecutions they sustain, continue firm and constant in the belief and profession of their Christian faith, and in the exercise of a spirit of piety and virtue. It should be well observed that, although our Saviour, here and in other passages, annexes blessedness and eternal life to the practice of single virtues, yet we are to understand His promises as founded on a supposition that such persons take care not to be deficient in the rest of their duty. To think otherwise would be to fall into a great mistake; a mistake, however, into which some Christians have fallen, when, magnifying single Christian virtues, they have thought by the practice of them to compound for the neglect or habitual violation of other duties.

MATT. v. 13-26.

YE are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a

· candlestick ; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets : I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven : but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill ; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment : but I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment : and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council : but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire. Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee ; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way ; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him ; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

ALTHOUGH Christ's first apostles and disciples seem principally concerned in some of these precepts, yet are they also intended for all Christians ; for it is the duty of

all Christians 'to shine as lights in the world, that they may see your good works.' The righteousness of all Christians must exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, by their performing internally as well as externally the whole of their duty both to God and man; by obeying every command, to the exclusion and neglect of none; and above all, by obeying with real integrity and sincerity of heart, so that their righteousness may be accepted with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Our Saviour here proceeds to set down some of the many instances in which the Christian religion has exalted our duty above what the Jewish doctors held men to be accountable for, and He pursues an analogy between the punishments inflicted by the Jewish courts, and the punishments of a future life. Their teachers told them that the commandment of God is, Thou shalt not kill. But our Lord goes much further; He says, Thou shalt not indulge any resentment against thy brother; thou shalt not use any reproachful or contemptuous language towards him; for these are the things that lead and provoke to the most atrocious deeds. Till the duty of forgiveness be discharged by ourselves, God will accept of no service or sacrifice at our hands. Therefore our Liturgy does with great reason declare it to be a necessary qualification for our worthily receiving the Sacrament, as well as for the certainty of inheriting eternal life, that we be in love and charity with our neighbours, because in the Blessed Sacrament of Christ's body and blood, we hope to have the forgiveness of our sins ratified and confirmed to us; and how can we hope for this from God, if we ourselves be not ready to forgive one another?

MATT. v. 27-37.

YE have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: but I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery. Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: but I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: nor by the earth; for it is His footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

OUR Lord, like a wise physician, goes at once to the bottom of the evil; He extirpates the first germ and root of the disease, and leaves not a single fibre of it remaining to shoot up again in the heart. His expressions here are highly figurative and alarming, but not more than the

occasion demanded. Every one must understand that the eye to be plucked out is the eye of concupiscence; that the hand to be cut off is the hand of violence and vengeance; that is, these passions are to be checked and subdued, let the conflict cost what it may. Let us then ever remember to watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation; to watch and pray against whatever sin doth most easily beset us. And let it incline us to intercede for others also, even for these most flagrant offenders, in the charitable hope that it will please God, not only to strengthen such as do stand, and to comfort and help the weak-hearted, but to raise up also them that fall, and finally to beat down Satan under their feet. And now observe further how Christ fulfils the law, that is, fully interprets its meaning in every important particular, and amongst others that of swearing oaths. Let always your yea be yea, and your nay, nay. Let your words and your deeds agree together. Truth and fidelity are the great bases on which all society is founded, and without which there could be no peace, no security, no right or property in the world. Let us then not only never take God's name in vain, but promote also in all we say, that practice of universal truth, which would make it plainly practicable to swear not at all.

MATT. v. 38-48.

YE have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him

that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you ; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven : for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye ? do not even the publicans the same ? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others ? do not even the publicans so ? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

AMONG the ancient heathens, private revenge was indulged without scruple and without mercy. It was to check this furious ungovernable passion, so universally prevalent, that our Saviour delivers the precepts which are here given : common sense requires, that we should consider the particular instances of behaviour here specified, as proverbial and figurative expressions, intended to convey a general precept, and to describe that peculiar temper and disposition which the Gospel requires ; that patience, gentleness, mildness, moderation, and forbearance under injuries and affronts, which is best calculated to preserve the peace of our own minds, as well as that of the world at large ; which tends to soften resentment and turn away wrath, and without which, on one side or the other, provocations must be endless and enmities eternal. By the command 'to love our enemies,' we are required to have always a favourable disposition of mind towards them, which will incline us to be just and charitable in our dealings with them ; to abstain from all revenge, to exert a ready forgiveness, to pray for them, and to do

them good offices when it lies in our power. It is the extent principally of the Divine mercy and compassion discernible in His works, which our Lord here presses. Your Father, He says, is bountiful to the evil as well as the good: go ye therefore and do likewise, learn from hence to love your enemies as well as your friends, to do good to those who hate you, as well as to those who love you, for He here recommends not only the temper of mercy which is natural to the Deity, but also that extensive exercise of it, that perfection of goodness, which shone forth in all His works.

MATT. vi. 1-8.

TAKE heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: that thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret Himself shall reward thee openly. And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they

shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him.

IN these passages we have strong and repeated cautions to avoid all show and ostentation in the performance of our religious duties, such as giving alms, praying, and fasting. Here is a marked disapprobation of everything that looks like parade, vainglory, insincerity, or hypocrisy in the discharge of our Christian duties. We see in the clearest light the spirit and temper of the Christian religion, which is modest, silent, retired, quiet, unobtrusive, shunning the observation and the applause of men, and looking only to the approbation of Him who sees every thought of our hearts, and every secret motive of our actions. It was customary for the Jews to pray standing; yet, on their more solemn days of fasting, they were wont to kneel, and even prostrate themselves before the Lord; but we may be sure that if we have only a continual sense of His presence, and of His knowledge of our most secret purposes, this will best secure in us the acceptable performance, not of alms only and prayer, but of every duty man has to perform, or God requires at his hands. Let us then consider in everything we do, What will He think of it? what will He think of us? Let us esteem Him to be that one chief Friend whose praise we most covet, and whose censure we most fear. And let us look ever with hope to that reward of His, which through Christ, and through His merits, may in the end be ours. May God give us grace to see Him in all things, even Him who in all things seeth us. May He make us to look mainly in all our doings to His will, even as He doth, in all His dealings with us, look only to our good.

MATT. vi. 9-15.

AFTER this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

THE Lord's Prayer stands unrivalled in every circumstance that constitutes the perfection of prayer, and the excellence of that species of composition. It is concise, it is perspicuous, it is solemn, it is comprehensive; it is adapted to all ranks, conditions, and classes of men; it fixes our thoughts on a few great important points, and impresses on our minds a deep sense of the goodness and the greatness of that Almighty Being to whom it is addressed. It begins with acknowledging Him to be our most gracious and merciful Father; it begs that His name may be everywhere revered, that His religion may spread over the earth, and that His will may be obeyed by men with the same ardour, and alacrity, and constancy, that it is by the angels in heaven. It next entreats the supply of all our essential wants, both temporal and spiritual; a sufficiency of those things that are absolutely necessary for our subsistence, the forgiveness of our transgressions, on condition that we forgive our brethren; and, finally, support under the temptations that assault our virtue, and deliverance from the various evils and cala-

mities that everywhere surround us, expressing at the same time the utmost trust and confidence in the power of God, to grant whatever He sees it expedient and proper for His creatures to receive. Such is the prayer which our Lord has set forth for our instruction. Let us endeavour to pray always after this manner. Let it be our first aim to cherish fervent love towards God and man. And when we seek what most we need, the forgiveness of our sins, let us remember the condition here so powerfully enforced; that it is only if 'we forgive men their trespasses' that our Heavenly Father will also forgive ours.

MATT. vi. 16-23.

MOREOVER when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly. Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

THE connexion of ideas given in the verses we have just read, seems to be this; our Lord says, 'Seek not after earthly treasures, for your affections will be where your treasure is.' If your understanding be so darkened as to mistake the principal object of human pursuit, and the nature of true happiness by looking on wealth as the most desirable of all things, your error is desperate, and in vain would you hope to unite the pursuit of wealth with the love of heavenly things, for no man can serve two masters; on these accounts, I exhort you not to be over-anxious in worldly matters, lest avarice get the dominion over you. Many times the things we here most covet, fail us, when most we reckon them our own. In any case we ourselves must at last leave them, leave also the world they belong to, and go to a world where they cannot follow us. Let us then always endeavour to see clearly and correctly with the eye of the inmost soul; and fixing it on those things above which Christ has revealed to our faith, there lay up our treasure, by here serving Him, and by here loving Him, there set our hearts also.

MATT. vi. 24-34.

NO man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek :) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

AGAIN we see no man can serve two masters so different as God and the world are; because they will give cross commands, and enjoin contrary things. God calls upon us to mind the duties of His worship and service, to have a serious regard to religion, and a diligent care of our souls; but the cares of the world and the importunity of business, and an eager appetite for being rich, call us off from these divine and spiritual employments, or disturb us in them. God calls upon us to be charitable to those that are in want, to be willing to distribute, and ready to communicate to the necessities of our brethren; but our covetousness pulls us back, draws us another way, and checks all merciful and charitable dispositions in us. God calls us to self-denial, and suffering for the sake of Him and His truth; and commands us to prefer the keeping of faith and a good conscience, to all worldly considerations whatever; but the world inspires us with

other thoughts, and whispers to us rather to put our immortal souls to hazard, than our bodies and estates. And how can we doubt God's thought and care of us, when we 'behold the fowls of the air,' always provided with food, and when we 'consider the lilies of the field, how they grow?' And this affords a clear comment on the words of our Saviour, when He sets forth, how much more God will think of us than of the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven. The firmament above, the earth below, the grass of the field, and the fowls of the air, proclaim aloud to men the providence of their Almighty Father. What folly then for us (who can add not one cubit to our stature) to distrust the fatherly care of God who gives us our being.

MATT. vii. 1-12.

JUDGE not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye. Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you. Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall

be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him? Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

By our Lord's expressions it is most plainly intimated that men who are themselves grievous sinners, are by no means proper persons to be hasty in reproving those, who, at the worst, are but their own resemblance: and that the true way to reform mankind is for each man to look at home, and begin with reforming himself. What a fund of encouragement is here given, for all manner of virtue, and particularly for devotion, that we may be fit objects of God's gracious care and providence; when we reflect that every petition of a good man is heard and regarded by Him who holds the reins of nature in His hand. The good man's prayer is among the reasons by which the Omnipotent is moved in the administration of the universe. How little is all earthly greatness! How low and impotent the proudest monarchs, when compared with the poorest person in the world, who leads a good life! For their influence even in their highest prosperity is only among weak men like themselves; but the poor man's prayer pierceth the clouds; and weak and contemptible as he seems, he can draw down the host of heaven, and arm the Almighty in his defence, so long as he does but utter his wants, or turn the thoughts of his heart to God. Let us then, whatever prayer we offer, ask believing. For thus hath our blessed Lord elsewhere assured us, 'All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer believing, ye shall receive.' (Matt. xxi. 22.)

MATT. vii. 13–23.

ENTER ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

OUR Lord here represents, by figurative expressions, how much the generality of men are disposed to follow error, in spite of the difficulties which it is necessary to surmount, and how small a portion pursue truth, and attach themselves to it. Our Saviour promises blessedness to none but those who actually live in the practice of those Christian graces and virtues, which are particularly mentioned by Him in the beginning of His excellent Sermon on the Mount; of humility and repent-

ance, of meekness and righteousness, mercifulness, purity, and peaceableness, patience under persecutions, and sufferings for righteousness' sake. Nothing can more clearly follow from this and other declarations of our Lord, than that there is in the Christian scheme an inseparable connexion between faith and good works. Nothing is more undeniable than that no degree of persuasion, desire, expectation, or dependence, will be accepted by God without a fixed and prevailing resolution of sincere and holy obedience. Narrow is the way wherein we have to walk, strait the gate through which we have to enter. Let us be aware that such is the nature of our pilgrimage. And when most we find all things smooth to us, then let us most suspect that in some point our conscience is asleep, our duty neglected, and our progress towards perfection at a stand. That so we may neither be deluded by the prophets of smooth things, nor by the fair show of trees whose fruit is corrupt; but, finding the true way that leadeth unto life, we may be counted, through the merits and mercy of our Lord, to have done the will of our Father which is in heaven.

MATT. vii. 24-29.

THEREFORE whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds

blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it. And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at His doctrine: for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes.

IN the hilly country of Judea the floods were extremely violent, and in the fall of the house here described as being built on the sand, we have a lively emblem of the ruin which will one day overwhelm the unhappy man, who trusts to an outward profession and form of godliness, when he does not sincerely and practically regard it. To hear and to do the sayings of Christ is the only way to build on a foundation that will never fail. That foundation is the promise of God; that rock is Christ Himself. He it is, and His death on which we build; the atonement He made for sin, the covenant He hath sealed for our redemption. The method of our building is faith, for it is by faith that we lay hold of the promises, by faith that we are justified, by faith that we are admitted into the covenant of grace. God give us strength to feel that 'His grace is sufficient' for us! God help us to be not 'weary in well-doing.' God make us to know, so far as here we may know, 'that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens!' (2 Cor. v. 1.)

MATT. viii. 1-4.

WHEN He was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, if

Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean. And Jesus put forth His hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

THE miracles of our Lord form the most striking confirmation of His doctrine. Well might *He* teach with authority, who could heal the sick, cleanse the leper, and raise the dead. This is the first of these signs and wonders which St. Matthew has recorded at any length, and in addition to the cure itself, the manner in which our Saviour performed it proved that all the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in Him; it was instantaneous, with a touch and a few words, and those the most dignified and sublime that can be imagined, 'I will; be thou clean.' This was plainly the language, as well as the act of God. As our Lord's time of suffering was not yet come, He seems to have commanded secrecy on this and other similar occasions, lest the rulers among the Jews should conspire and put Him to death before He had given sufficient proofs of His divine mission, and had sufficiently instructed His disciples in His doctrine. From the history of this miracle we should learn to apply, with faith, for the cure of our souls, to Him who alone can say, 'I will; be thou clean.' No outward purifying can here suffice. With the tears, rather, of repentance, with the offering of an humble and devout spirit; with these let us appear before our great High Priest. His merciful touch will heal our infirmities; and His voice, in the presence of His Father, will pronounce us whole and clean.

MATT. viii. 5-13.

AND when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto Him a centurion, beseeching Him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him. The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. When Jesus heard it, He marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the self-same hour.

WHAT a remarkable feature in this centurion is his humility! How completely this most amiable of human virtues had taken possession of his soul, is evident from the manner in which he now solicits our Saviour for the cure; how cautious he is, how modest, how diffident, how fearful of offending, even whilst he was only begging an act of kindness for another. The reason of the high encomium bestowed on the centurion by our Saviour was, because he believed in our Lord's power to work miracles, even at a distance; and though he had been bred up in the princi-

ples of heathenism, he was induced, by the accounts he had received of our Saviour's doctrines and miracles, to acknowledge that He was a divine person. Whereas the Jews, to whom Christ was first and principally sent, who from their infancy were instructed in the Holy Scriptures, in which were such plain and express promises of the Messiah, and who actually did expect His coming about that time, suffered themselves to be so blinded by their prejudices and passions, that neither the unspotted sanctity of His life, the excellence of His doctrine, nor the repeated and astonishing miracles which He wrought, could make the slightest impression on the greater part of that stubborn people. The faith then of the master here contributed to the cure of his servant. This faith let us now seek by prayer, by meditation on God's Word, and by the constant practice of His will, that so we may be prepared for that day, when each Christian soul must receive for its last sentence, 'As thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee.'

MATT. viii. 14-22.

AND when Jesus was come into Peter's house, He saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever. And He touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them. When the even was come, they brought unto Him many that were possessed with devils: and He cast out the spirits with His word, and healed all that were sick: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses. Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave commandment to depart unto the other side. And a certain scribe came, and said unto Him, Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever

Thou goest. And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head. And another of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.

THE centurion had justly said, 'Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof.' Yet Jesus, we see, was willing to enter the lowly dwelling of His disciple Peter, where He saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever. Our Lord immediately 'touched her hand, and the fever left her.' Hence, we learn that her recovery was instantaneous; and thus did He, in the self-same hour, give proof of divine power and of human nature. In our Lord's answer to the scribe, He gave Himself the title of 'The Son of Man,' but no one else ever applied it to Him except the first martyr, St. Stephen. This shows that it is an expression of humility, and has reference to the abasement of His divine nature in the human. He seems to have used it to counteract the false opinion of the Jews concerning the nature of His kingdom, and to intimate to them that He was to arrive at His glory by passing through suffering and humiliation. The lowly, destitute, and suffering condition of our Lord, renders His example to mankind perfect, and shows His virtues in their truest lustre, while it silences those pleas which self-love would otherwise have suggested. For what pretence is now left to any of us? Are we more wretched than our Master? Are we poor, and therefore discontented? Let us look to Him who had not 'where to lay His head,' and yet was contented, and paid a ready obedience to His God. How freely then must we give up, at His bidding, the plans we most fondly cherish, the engagements we may have most eagerly desired! And in all this subjection to

His will, how deeply should we feel convinced that He both best knows what is good for us, and kindly gives us that which is the best.

MATT. viii. 23-34.

AND when He was entered into a ship, His disciples followed Him. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but He was asleep. And His disciples came to Him, and awoke Him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. And He saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then He arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him! And when He was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time? And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding. So the devils besought Him, saying, If Thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine. And He said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine; and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters. And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told every thing, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils. And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw Him, they besought Him that He would depart out of their coasts.

A STRONG current is caused in the lake of Gennesareth, by the river Jordan passing through the midst of it; and when this is opposed by contrary winds, which blow here with the force of a hurricane from the south-east, sweeping from the mountains into the lake, a boisterous sea is instantly raised, which the small vessels of the country are ill qualified to resist. When Christ rebuked the tempest, not only the wind was laid, but the surface of the sea was smooth and level, as the word properly signifies; whereas, commonly after a storm, the sea is for a long time in motion. This circumstance assists in showing the full force of the miraculous power which was exerted. Along the borders of the lake of Gennesareth may still be seen the remains of those ancient tombs, hewn by the earliest inhabitants of Galilee, in the rocks which face the water. Their existence at the present day offers strong internal evidence of the accuracy of the Evangelist, who has recorded the transaction of the demoniacs dwelling among the tombs. This is the only miracle recorded to have been wrought by our Lord, to the damage of any individuals; and though the nature of the guilt of the Gergesenes is not distinctly mentioned, we may be sure it must have been great, to require such a punishment. For God is infinitely wise, just, and holy, and can never act but for some wise, just, and holy purpose, whether that purpose be by us discoverable or not.

MATT. ix. 1-8.

AND He entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into His own city. And, behold, they brought to Him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son,

be of good cheer ; thy sins be forgiven thee. And, behold certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth. And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts ? For whether is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee ; or to say, Arise, and walk ? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (then saith He to the sick of the palsy), Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. And he arose and departed to his house. But when the multitudes saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.

IN St. Mark's and St. Luke's account of this miracle, it is related that on account of the multitude, the friends of the sick man let him down through the roof of the house in his couch. Nothing could better express the vigour of their faith ; that is, their eager desire of obtaining, and their confident expectation of receiving, a cure, from the power and goodness of Christ, of which they had entertained so full a persuasion. And therefore He, (who never wanted inclination to pity and relieve the distressed, and only waited till men were duly qualified to receive the mercies which He was always ready to bestow,) ' seeing their faith,' granted their request, and immediately healed the distemper, and, like an able and experienced physician, He struck directly at the root, and set Himself to remove the cause of the malady, which was sin. Had man never committed sin, he had never known disease. Sickness is a part of the curse inflicted on disobedience. The captious Pharisees, upon His releasing the sick man from inward guilt, immediately charged our Lord with blasphemy. The principle on which this accusation went our Lord plainly allows ; but then He clears Himself of it by this consequence, that, as no power but God's could forgive sins, so none but God's could work this

miracle of healing, for what miracle could be more complete than this? What had the Pharisees to say? Did they still doubt the power of Jesus to forgive sins? They remained speechless, swelling with malice and envy: neither willing to commend, nor able to find fault; yet the hearts of the common people, more generous and open to conviction, were most sensibly touched at seeing the paralytic leap off his bed, for 'they marvelled and glorified God.'

MATT. ix. 9-17.

AND as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and He saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed Him. And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto His disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners? But when Jesus heard that, He said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Then came to Him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but Thy disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast. No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. Neither

do men put new wine into old bottles; else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.

It seems that after Jesus had desired St. Matthew to follow Him, he made a great feast, and invited our Saviour to meet many who followed the same corrupt occupation with himself; probably for the purpose of affording them an opportunity of receiving the benefit of conversion, as he had done. This displeased the Pharisees, and our Saviour perceiving it said, I converse with sinners for the same reason that physicians visit the sick: the end of my coming into the world is to heal and save men's souls. I therefore justly apply my remedies to such as want and desire them, not to those who think they have no need of them. The great design of His coming into the world was 'not to call the righteous,' but those that have been sinners, to repentance and reformation. All are sinners, only all know not their sins: and some there are that trust in themselves that they are righteous, and despise others. Let us not then say that we have no sin, lest we deceive ourselves, and the truth be not in us. Neither let us be content with merely owning that we are sinners, without obeying also the invitation to repentance. For so only may we rejoice with the heavenly Bridegroom, if we presume not on His mercy to continue in sin, but take it for our great motive to amendment of life, if, the more freely He offers to forgive, the more sincerely we aim to have the less to be forgiven.

MATT. ix. 18-26.

WHILE He spake these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshipped Him, saying, My daughter is even now dead : but come and lay Thy hand upon her, and she shall live. And Jesus arose, and followed him, and so did His disciples. And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind Him, and touched the hem of His garment : for she said within herself, If I may but touch His garment, I shall be whole. But Jesus turned Him about, and when He saw her He said, Daughter, be of good comfort ; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour. And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise, He said unto them, Give place : for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed Him to scorn. But when the people were put forth He went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose. And the fame hereof went abroad into all that land.

IN the healing of the woman here mentioned, it was not her touching the garment of our Saviour, but faith that made her whole. And this faith is within our reach. And although since the ascension of Christ into heaven we enjoy not the like privilege of touching or beholding Him, we should rejoice to think that, nevertheless, we have access to the benefits of His heavenly healing. Let us then be firmly persuaded that in Him is a divine virtue to remove all our infirmities. Weak though we be, He can make us strong ; sinful, yet He can make us righteous. This miracle took place whilst our Lord was on His way to the ruler's house, whose daughter was 'even now dead.'

By way of preparing them for her restoration to life, 'He said unto them, Give place; for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth.' Being quite certain that the young woman was truly dead, they made light of Christ's words, which they understood to mean literally that she was only asleep. He, however, went in, and 'took her by the hand, and the maid arose.' True then were His words, in the sense He meant; true were they proved to the beholders: and to us, whom they most deeply concern, are they full of grace no less than truth. For this much we may learn from them for our comfort, that death, under the control of our blessed Lord, is, unto all them that believe in Him, only as the repose of sleep. Then shall the Lord take them by the hand, and they shall arise, not to a state of trial, but to a crown of victory; to a heaven where there shall be neither toil nor sleep, but life perpetual, and at God's right hand 'pleasure for evermore.'

MATT. ix. 27-38.

AND when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed Him, crying, and saying, Thou Son of David, have mercy on us. And when He was come into the house, the blind men came to Him: and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord. Then touched He their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you. And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See that no man know it. But they, when they were departed, spread abroad His fame in all that country. As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a dumb man possessed with a devil. And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake: and the multitudes marvelled,

saying, It was never so seen in Israel. But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils. And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith He unto His disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest.

WE should well observe how many various kinds were the miracles performed by our Saviour. He made the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak; He cleansed lepers, made the maimed whole, cast out devils, and healed every human malady; He stilled the sea, and raised the dead. And His miracles were so numerous that they exceeded all which are recorded in the Scriptures as performed by God's prophets. Thus, in this and many other particulars, their nature and character is such as to prove the conclusion of St. John, 'that He was the Christ, the Son of God.' The admiration of the people was extremely natural; for none of their prophets, not even Moses, had ever equalled Christ in the power and facility of working miracles. Let us also observe how Jesus on all occasions discovers Himself to be, what His name implies, the Saviour, leaving behind Him, wherever He goes, the warmth of fervent charity, the light of evangelical truth, and the fragrance of a good report concerning something done for the benefit of man, and the glory of God. He either teaches, or comforts, or raises from the dead, or heals, or departs into a mountain to pray. And all for us. In this, as well as in other things, 'leaving us

an example, that we should follow His steps,' and not suffer any outward circumstances to make us forget our Christian profession. And whilst we beseech Him that His harvest may be speedily gathered in, let us forward it, and help in it ourselves, that so we may here enjoy the thought that we have aided in the salvation of our brethren; and shall be summoned hereafter, as faithful labourers, to receive the wages of eternal life.

MATT. x. 1-15.

AND when He had called unto Him His twelve disciples, He gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphæus, and Lebbæus, whose surname was Thaddæus; Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him. These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give. Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat. And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence. And when ye come

into an house, salute it. And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it : but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city.

WE should pause to consider who were singled out by our blessed Lord, for the purpose of diffusing His religion through the world. Would not you expect that a change such as this would require agents of a superior class, of considerable influence from birth, wealth, and station in life, men of profound erudition, of the brightest talents, the most consummate knowledge of the world and the human heart, and the most commanding eloquence? Were then the apostles of this description? Quite the contrary. They were plain, humble, unpretending men, of low birth and low occupations, without learning, education, or any extraordinary endowments natural or acquired; without anything, in short, to recommend them, but their simplicity, integrity, and purity of manners.

With such as these Christ held conversation during the whole course of His ministry, affectionately complying with their weakness, patiently enduring their perverseness, in order to cure them, to strengthen and increase their faith, to open their eyes, and enlarge their understandings, so that they might of themselves judge what was right, and teach the same to others. They were directed not to go in the way of the Gentiles, but 'to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' So faithfully did the Almighty fulfil His covenant with the chosen people! So entirely will He in like manner make good His promises, no less gracious, to the children of the faith of Abraham, in all ages and nations of the world. Only let us be duly sen-

sible that the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Only let us not, through our own unbelief, fall short of His proffered mercy ; or fail to receive freely, that is, gladly and thankfully, that grace which is freely and bountifully given.

MATT. x. 16-26.

BEHOLD, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you. And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come. The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household? Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.

THE character of the Christian mission is denoted in these words: 'Behold, I send you forth as sheep;' and the condition of an unbelieving world in the following words: 'I send you in the midst of wolves.' Though the faith was to be propagated only by the mild measures of persuasion, yet even this would provoke the wolfish dispositions of the powers of darkness, to employ all the iniquitous contrivances of fraud and violence for its suppression. Christ promises here to His apostles immediate assistance from the Holy Spirit; He bids them not to be anxious, and forbids them to meditate beforehand what they should say; but He also informs them that they were to experience persecution and hatred from men, and that they would be exposed to evils and dangers. Have we then any right to expect that we shall not have our trials and difficulties in this world? Christ suffered for us, 'the just for the unjust.' Much more then should we suffer for Him, the unjust for the just, out of regard to His will. And there should be no greater comfort to us than to know, that herein we may become like unto Christ, if we suffer patiently, cheerfully, and thankfully. Let us not then be disheartened either by the fear of man, or by apprehension of the pains, and weariness, and sorrow, which this life usually presents. The more we have to bear, the more gladly let us suffer; the more we have to do, the more devoutly let us work. For we cannot have either so much to do, or so much to bear, for Christ's sake, as He graciously condescended both to do and to endure for us, and for our deliverance from eternal death.

MATT. x. 27-33.

WHAT I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light :
and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon
the housetops. And fear not them which kill the body, but
are not able to kill the soul : but rather fear Him which is
able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two
sparrows sold for a farthing ? and one of them shall not
fall on the ground without your Father. But the very
hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not there-
fore, ye are of more value than many sparrows. Whosoever
therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess
also before my Father which is in heaven. But whoso-
ever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before
my Father which is in heaven.

HERE we find further topics of encouragement, set forth
to the apostles in their preaching of the Gospel. And we
may apply them to our own support. How magnificent is
this idea of God's government !—that He inspects the
whole and every part of His universe every moment, and
orders it according to the counsels of His infinite wisdom
and goodness, by His omnipotent will ; whose thought is
power, and His acts ten thousand times quicker than the
light, unconfined in a multiplicity exceeding number, and
unwearied through eternity. How much comfort and
encouragement does this give to all good and devout
persons !—that Almighty God, as He has His eye con-
tinually upon us, so is He employed constantly in direct-
ing, in doing, what is best for us. Thus we may be sure
indeed that all things work together for our good. The
Lord is truly our Shepherd ; not leaving us to chance or

fate, but watching over us Himself; therefore we can lack nothing; and how truly happy are all we who have the only-begotten Son of God to confess us before the Father, and to intercede with Him in our behalf.

MATT. x. 34-42.

THINK not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be those of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it. He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth Him that sent me. He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.

OUR Lord's intention here is to convey to His disciples right notions of that peace which He was to bring. It is not, He says, immediate temporal peace, but peace in a spiritual sense, peace in your own minds, and peace with God. Ultimately, indeed, I shall establish peace in every

sense of the word ; but at present, and for many years to come, I shall not bring peace,¹ but a sword upon earth. Our Saviour wished it to be understood that the religion which He taught would meet with most violent opposition from the world ; and He warns His faithful followers that they must soon expect the dreadful effects of fiery zeal, even from their nearest friends and relations.

When we are commanded in Scripture ‘ to take up our cross and follow Christ,’ ‘ to deny ourselves,’ ‘ to mortify our members,’ these expressions by no means imply what some have chosen to infer from them, that we are to renounce the world and all its pleasures, employments, connexions, and concerns, to forego everything that is cheerful and agreeable to our nature, and to consume our whole life in abstinence and austerity. This never was the interpretation our Lord intended ; His only wish was to enjoin a constant habit of vigilance and self-government, and a cautious and jealous attention to the movements of our minds, and the progress of our passions. Let us then be ever willing to do good to all men, let us render our best offices to those whom, by reason of their sufferings in His behalf, we may count as His little ones, or beloved children ; for so carefully kept is the account, that where but ‘ a cup of cold water ’ is given in true Christian love, our Lord has here declared of the giver, ‘ He shall in no wise lose his reward.’ The more deeply we lay to heart this promise of a recompense, as our encouragement in Christian practice, the more frequently will our manifold frailties throw us back on the Divine mercies, as they are assured to transgressors through the blood of Christ. And what can, on the other hand, more enliven our faith in His merits, and our sense of His love, than the hope that through these, there is secured for service so faint, so frail as ours, a crown of eternal glory ?

MATT. xi. 1-6.

AND it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding His twelve disciples, He departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities. Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and said unto Him, Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them. And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me.

How unwearied is our Lord in His labour of love! He ceased not to work Himself, though He had others now commissioned to work for Him. Let all of us here resolve to be 'not weary in well-doing,' but diligent in whatever good we have in hand, not doubting that 'in due season we shall reap if we faint not.' It was the office of John to prepare the minds of His disciples to believe in Christ. He told them that such and such things were laid down by the Prophets as certain marks and characters by which the Messiah might be known at His coming; and they had ocular demonstration of these things agreeing to Jesus. Therefore, it was their duty most assuredly to believe that Jesus was 'He that should come,' and after such evidence they were not to look for another. Thus are we directed to consider that Jesus was the Christ. Let us, then, take to ourselves His words which follow,—'Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me.' Blessed is that man who shall not, by the perversity of his own disposition, be hindered from

believing in Christ. The tidings of salvation are now made known with no less fulness to the lowliest in the land than to the monarch on his throne. Blessed are they who shall profit by these means of conviction; not neglecting them to their own greater condemnation, but improving them to their growth in grace.

MATT. xi. 7-19.

AND as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before Thy face, which shall prepare Thy way before Thee. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a

devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.

OUR Lord had corrected the views held in regard to Himself by St. John's disciples. He now sets right His own followers in their notions relating to the Baptist; for he was by no means 'a reed shaken by the wind,' as some thought, but one whose preaching, rightly understood, uniformly testified that Jesus was the Christ. Nor was he a prophet only, for he was the immediate harbinger of God incarnate; but notwithstanding this, He told them the least saint in heaven was greater than he. Having commended John, Christ condemns those who had seen and known him, and did not profit by his ministry. And by reason of their waywardness and folly they are here likened to children who, as they change rapidly their several sports, find fault, one party with another, for not changing as rapidly as themselves. 'But wisdom is justified of her children.' That is to say, in spite of the prevailing perversity of mankind, though many thus derive no benefit from the counsel of God for their salvation, yet are there many who use it effectually. How large must be the value of each single soul! how great the joy and glory of its saving! And how should it animate our faint exertions, and quicken our dead affections towards heaven, to think that we have within us a charge so precious; souls that, by a true faith in the Gospel of Christ, may justify its wisdom to the world.

MATT. xi. 20-30.

THEN began He to upbraid the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done, because they repented not : Woe unto thee, Chorazin ! woe unto thee, Bethsaida ! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell : for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee. At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father : for so it seemed good in Thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father : and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father : neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him. Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me ; for I am meek and lowly in heart : and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

WHAT an awful sentence is this recorded against Chorazin and Bethsaida ! What a fearful thought is it to us, who are enjoying in so full a degree the light of the Gospel of Christ ! Far more do we know of our Lord,

and of His mighty works, than did they of Chorazin and Bethsaida ! We know that for us He died on the cross. We know that for us He rose from the dead. We know that He ascended also into heaven, in order that where He is there we might be also. Are, then, our hearts already there ? If not, we know that our sentence is here plainly set down,—‘It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you.’ Let us not be among those who deserve such a condemnation, but among those for whom Jesus (after reflecting on the success which the Gospel had met with in persons of a different disposition from those upbraided in these verses) gives solemn thanks to the Father, and magnifies the wisdom of that dispensation which left the self-conceited in their ignorance, and instructed the meek and lowly in the mysteries of the Gospel. That Son to whom all things are delivered hath also offered rest to all, without distinction, who labour and are heavy-laden with sin. The body may suffer, but the heart has joy. The flesh may be weary, but the soul is sure of rest. So easy is the yoke of Christ, that to the faithful Christian it is a pleasure rather than a trouble to bear it. Christ is a Master who will never require of us more than He will give us grace to perform, nor lay a greater burden upon us than He will give us strength to bear. By Him we can love, and fear, and trust in God, and serve and honour Him, with a perfect heart and willing mind ; and, what is more, by His merits and mediation we procure the pardon of our sins, and the acceptance of our imperfect endeavours to do the will of God.

MATT. xii. 1-13.

AT that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and His disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat. But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto Him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day. But He said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him; how he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests? Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless? But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple. But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day. And when He was departed thence He went into their synagogue; and, behold, there was a man which had his hand withered. And they asked Him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day? that they might accuse Him. And He said unto them, What man shall there be among you that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days. Then said He to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other.

FROM the account here given, it appears how constantly the Jews had their eyes fixed on Jesus and His

followers ; and how anxiously they sought for opportunities of fastening some guilt upon them. But Christ was the Lord of the Sabbath ; and as the Lord's day is especially the time for healing the souls of men, so Christ, by healing the man that had the withered hand on the Sabbath day, shows that works of mercy are lawful and proper to be done on that day. The Pharisees, in finding fault with the disciples for plucking the ears of corn on the Sabbath, were convicted by our Lord of condemning the guiltless. Let us beware lest, if like them, we once begin to find fault wrongfully, we should be tempted to add sin to sin, till like them we come to shame and confusion of face. Our Sabbath is the day on which Christ arose from the dead, and became the first-fruits of that new creation which comprehends all those who die in the Lord. That day then let us take care to spend, not in mere ceasing from worldly work, much less the enjoyment of mere worldly pleasures : but in labouring for that meat which endureth unto eternal life. Hungering and thirsting after righteousness, let us pluck and eat the ears of that good seed which will spring up in us unto everlasting life. The harvest is ready. The Lord of the harvest invites, and proclaims to all who are in need ; 'Ho ; every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money ; come ye, buy and eat.' (Isa. lv. 1.)

MATT. xii. 14-30.

THEN the Pharisees went out, and held a council against Him, how they might destroy Him. But when Jesus knew it, He withdrew Himself from thence : and great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them all ; and charged them that they should not make Him

known: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall show judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. And in his name shall the Gentiles trust. Then was brought unto Him one possessed with a devil, blind and dumb: and He healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David? But when the Pharisees heard it they said, This fellow does not cast out devils but by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils. And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: and if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand? And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you. Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house. He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.

THE Pharisees, though put to silence, were in no way nearer being converted, but went and consulted how they should destroy Jesus. Our Saviour, instead of punishing them, showed them the difference between their malignant passions and the mild, gentle, conciliating disposition which His religion inspired. What an amiable picture is given in

the passage which ensues of the Divine Author of our faith! and how exactly does this prophetic description correspond with the whole tenour of his conduct! He ever exercised meekness, gentleness, and humility, without contention and noise, without tumult and disturbance. He never bore hard upon a wounded, contrite, and truly humble heart, bowed down with a sense of its infirmity; nor did He ever extinguish the faintest spark of returning virtue, but cherished and encouraged the one, and raised, animated, and enlivened the other, till, by these gentle, conciliating means, He triumphed over the wickedness and malevolence of His enemies, and completely established His religion throughout the world.

MATT. xii. 31-37.

WHEREFORE I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come. Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit. O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.

To speak a word against the Son of man means, to express a doubt as to whether He were the Christ. Even this our Lord allows to be comparatively pardonable, appearing as He did 'a man of sorrows;' a form and character so different from what was expected. But to speak against the Holy Ghost was to speak against that Spirit with which in their own Scriptures they were familiar. Our Lord in acts of contumely against Himself, always returned good for evil; graciously bearing with the contradiction of those who had full means of knowing Him. But He threatens with endless punishment all those who blaspheme the Holy Ghost. Thus by our words we shall be justified, or by our words we shall be condemned. Let us speak ever with an eye to God's glory, and follow after those things by which we may edify one another. Let us seek frequently the opportunity to inform and exhort our brethren for good. And let us make occasion, where we cannot find it, by showing forth, in all we say, at any time, a spirit of forbearance, gentleness, and love.

MATT. xii. 38-50.

THEN certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from Thee. But He answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater

than Jonas is here. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here. When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation. While He yet talked to the people, behold, His mother and His brethren stood without, desiring to speak with Him. Then one said unto Him, Behold, Thy mother and Thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with Thee. But He answered and said unto him that told Him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And He stretched forth His hand toward His disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.

THE Pharisees here tried a new method of ensnaring the divine Teacher. They came to Him with plausible words, calling Him by the name of Master, and expressing their readiness to believe, if He would give them some certain sign. The sign they wished for, was founded on an expectation of His descending visibly from heaven to the lower world, with the utmost splendour and magnificence. But He would only give them the sign of the prophet Jonas—and by this figurative expression He signified His own death, burial, and resurrection; but this did not satisfy their worldly notions and feelings.

How watchful ought we to be! how anxious to increase daily in the knowledge of Christ, and not in the knowing only, but in the doing also of Christ's will!

The mother and brethren of Jesus, became naturally of great importance in the eyes of the disciples. So great indeed, that in after times Christians fell into the gross error of dividing to them the honour due to Christ alone. But here we learn how wrong it is to offer unto the mother of our Lord any reverence approaching to divine worship, for 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve,'—though we ought deeply to respect the memory of one who was so highly favoured, and let us not rest till we may be counted of that blessed family whereof Christ is the head. May our heavenly Father confer on us the true distinction to be Sons of Him, brethren of Christ! brethren who dwell together in unity of faith and love! sons, who, though what they shall be doth not yet appear, know that when He shall appear they shall be like Him. (1 John, iii. 2.)

MATT. xiii. 1-17.

THE same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side. And great multitudes were gathered together unto Him, so that He went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. And He spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; and when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was up, they were

scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: but other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. And the disciples came, and said unto Him, Why speakest Thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.

MANY of the parables of the New Testament excel every thing of the kind that ever was written, and this parable, in simple and familiar imagery, exhibits the most profound knowledge of human nature, and the most philosophical survey of the hearts and dispositions of the various classes of hearers, of which the mixed multitude was then, and is always composed. As in the earth there

is great diversity of soils, some bad and some good, in different degrees and shades; so in mankind, there is an equal diversity of hearts and dispositions, some bad more or less, some comparatively good. But as the earth cannot produce anything of itself, without culture, except briers, thorns, and weeds, even where the soil is best, so neither can mankind, merely by themselves and without Divine cultivation, produce any spiritual fruit acceptable to God. All in the state of nature are alike barren and unprofitable, until the good seed is sown in the former, by the careful husbandman; and the Word of God in the latter, by Christ, His apostles, and His ministers. Let us then rejoice in the many opportunities we have offered to us to hear the Word of God. Let us apply all we see and all we hear to the case of our own conscience, and the nourishment of our own souls. Let us pray ever unto Him who alone can give it, and above all, let us hear with faith, that the word being 'mixed with faith,' may spring up in our hearts unto everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

MATT. xiii. 18-23.

HEAR ye therefore the parable of the sower. When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side. But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. He also that received

seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word ; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it ; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

THE seed here sown is the gospel, 'the Word of God.' The sower is our blessed Saviour ; who by Himself and by His ministers, deals it forth with unsparing hand to men of every variety of disposition. Some receive it by the way side where it cannot possibly take root, and bring forth fruit ; it is exposed and unguarded, the sun burns it, the frost kills it, the wind disperses it, the rain washes it away, the foot of the passenger and of the beast tramples and crushes it, the birds of the air pick it up and eat it. A sad image and melancholy representation of the worst of sinners ! Some receive the word in stony places, where some little soil is found, amongst a profusion of stones and rubbish. These are they who have some faint and feeble good purposes, but want strength of mind, soundness of principle, and sincerity of faith, to keep them steadfast in it. Their resolutions therefore fail in the trial. The sunshine of prosperity, or the storm of affliction, easily makes their shortlived proficiency wither. Some receive the seed as among thorns ; here are represented those Christians who in their youth receive religious instruction and imbibe good principles, but no sooner do they go forth into the world, than they take the road either of business or of pleasure, and have neither time nor inclination to cultivate the seeds of religion that have been sown in their hearts. The consequence is, the weeds prevail, and the seed is lost. But those who hear the Word, and understand it, are those who lay it to heart, call it to mind, meditate on the benefits arising

from it, the danger of neglecting it, and the wisdom of preferring eternal life to all other considerations. This is the fair foundation laid for a regular course of life, and an honest discharge of Christian duties. Grant us, O Lord, grace, to hear with faith the preaching of Thy Word, to frequent with reverence Thy house of prayer: and to follow with humility, those true shepherds whom Thou hast appointed to feed Thy flock.

MATT. xiii. 24-43.

ANOTHER parable put He forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the housholder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn. Another parable put He forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof. Another parable spake

He unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened. All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake He not unto them: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world. Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and His disciples came unto Him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom, but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

THE object of this parable of the Tares, is first to show that, notwithstanding all the care and vigilance of Christ's ministers, 'offences must needs come' into the world, through the subtilty of the devil, who sows mischief in the hearts of men; and secondly, to point out the reason of that long-suffering forbearance towards sinners, which the Almighty is pleased to display. This parable also shows that iniquity can neither be prevented nor immediately punished, consistently with the wisdom of God; and thereby shuts out every complaint, and forces us to ac-

knowledge that God is just in all His ways, and righteous in all His dealings with mankind. The meaning of the parable of the Mustard Seed is, that the Gospel of Christ, at its first appearing, seemed mean and contemptible, received only by a few, and those of low condition; but that in time it should spread over the whole earth; and that doctrines, which the Jews then despised and rejected, should be embraced and flourish among all the nations of the Gentiles. And in the parable of the Leaven, our Lord implies, that the Gospel which now begins to be taught amongst men, shall by the power and evidence of truth insensibly spread itself in time through all the nations of the world. Let all then endeavour to be as good leaven. Let us aim to spread abroad the love of Christ, and every occasion we may have, to say or to do anything that is good, anything we may know to be His will, let us rejoice to think, that in obeying it, we shall provoke unto good works, in our several degrees, not our friends only, and neighbours, but all mankind.

MATT. xiii. 44-58.

A GAIN, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be

at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto Him, Yea, Lord. Then said He unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an housholder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old. And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these parables, He departed thence. And when He was come into His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? is not His mother called Mary? and His brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things? And they were offended in Him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house. And He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.

THE design of the two first parables here related is, to represent in general that the Gospel of Jesus is the greatest of blessings. Also to show the different dispositions of the converts which the apostles would make to the Gospel; some would embrace it with joy, when found, as it were by accident, like treasure hid in the field; others, when found after diligent search, like the merchant seeking precious pearls, would purchase the field and the pearl of great price with all their substance. The last parable alludes to the occupation of the apostles as fishermen, and represents them as catching men indiscriminately, of all sorts, both good and bad, to compose the visible Church of Christ. He warns them that they should lay up these

doctrines in their minds, that they may be thoroughly qualified to become preachers of the Gospel, and be able on all occasions to bring forth out of their memories, as out of a well-furnished storehouse, instructions suited to persons of all capacities.

Well may we ask, as the Jews on this occasion did, but with another spirit, Whence hath this man wisdom? How could it be that One, of birth so lowly, of education so mean, should confound the wisdom of the wise, and speak ‘as never man spake?’ What else can we gather from His whole behaviour than that which the spectators did from the finishing scene of it upon the cross, ‘Truly this was the Son of God?’

God grant, that the more we know, the more we may believe. May He make us in our prayers, and in the study of His Word, to go from strength to strength; the more we learn, the more to reverence; and the more we reverence, the more to love!

MATT. xiv. 1–21.

AT that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus, and said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him. For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for Herodias’ sake, his brother Philip’s wife. For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her. And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet. But when Herod’s birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod. Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would

ask. And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger, And the king was sorry : nevertheless for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her. And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison. And his head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel : and she brought it to her mother. And his disciples came, and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus. When Jesus heard of it, He departed thence by ship into a desert place apart : and when the people had heard thereof, they followed Him on foot out of the cities. And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and He healed their sick. And when it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past ; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals. But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart ; give ye them to eat. And they say unto Him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes. He said, Bring them hither to me. And He commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, He blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to His disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they did all eat, and were filled : and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full. And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children.

HEROD, like most other persons of high rank at that time, was of the sect of the Sadducees, who denied the immortality of the soul, and the doctrine of a resurrection. His opinions must, therefore, have made him completely adverse to the idea of John the Baptist being risen from the dead. Yet the fears of Herod overruled all the

prejudices of his sect, and his guilty conscience made him think that this was John the Baptist. The Evangelist, having thus mentioned him, goes back a little in the narrative to make the reader acquainted with that part of the Baptist's history which brought down upon him the resentment of Herod, and was the occasion of his death. It should be observed in how dispassionate a manner, and with what uncommon candour, St. Matthew relates this most atrocious action. And from this painful narrative we should be careful to observe how rapid is the progress of iniquity; from wrong to anger, from anger to oppression, from oppression to murder. Let us then be careful that no sin get dominion over us. At the tidings of John's death Jesus departed from the place where He then was. He went into a desert place, where He worked a miracle of which all partook; and in this miracle we should acknowledge the same Almighty Power which at the first made all things of nothing, which still giveth to the seed its increase, and to which it is alike easy to feed with a few loaves so many thousands, or all living creatures with the fruits in their seasons. But chiefly should we take occasion to observe the ability and readiness of God, to feed and to fill all those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. Let us ask for this heavenly nourishment in prayer, as for our daily bread; and partake of it habitually, in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, to the everlasting comfort of our souls.

MATT. xiv. 22-36.

AND straightway Jesus constrained His disciples to get into a ship, and to go before Him unto the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. And when He

had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray : and when the evening was come, He was there alone. But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves : for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit ; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer ; it is I, be not afraid. And Peter answered Him and said, Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water. And He said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid ; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt ? And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased. Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped Him, saying, Of a truth Thou art the Son of God. And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret. And when the men of that place had knowledge of Him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto Him all that were diseased ; and besought Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment : and as many as touched were made perfectly whole.

WE here read that our Saviour, after having spent the day in acts of charity, in relieving and instructing the people, withdrew to a secret place, where He spent the evening alone in prayer and contemplation ; and from His example we learn that we ought to set apart some portion of our time for private and silent acts of religion, for conversation with God and our own hearts. The

miracle of Christ walking on the sea seems to have been designed to encourage the great principle of faith, and of trust and reliance upon God. The reproof of our Lord was well calculated to convince St. Peter that it was in proportion to the degree and perseverance of His faith, that He must rise or sink. And what He says to Peter, He says to all who waver in their belief, ‘O ye of little faith, wherefore do ye doubt?’ Many times our night of trial may be dark, or the waves of our affliction high. But these things do no more than try our faith. And if only we believe, we have proof in these words of Christ, that He is at hand to help us. Let us then not merely be not afraid, but be also of good cheer. Let us persevere in well-doing, with a lively persuasion that we shall have grace to continue to the end, and with a thankful sense of Christ’s assistance, by whose strength alone we stand; and let us endeavour too with faith, like the men of Gennesaret, to bring to the knowledge of His healing love, all whom we see around us to be in need of it. It is when we perceive in what peril we have been, and how we have escaped, that by prayer and precept, and, above all, by the force of good example, we should try most heartily to win others to salvation.

MATT. xv. 1–20.

THEN came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do Thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But He answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth

father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; and honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. And He called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man. Then came His disciples, and said unto Him, Knowest Thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? But He answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch. Then answered Peter and said unto Him, Declare unto us this parable. And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding? Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.

THE Scribes were persons who, at a time when there was no such thing as printing, wrote out copies of the Jewish Scriptures. Hence, they came to set themselves up for interpreters of their meaning. These Scribes,

together with the Pharisees, used to teach the people to observe matters that were merely of man's invention, with no less care and diligence than the law of Moses. Such were some exact rules they made about washing of hands at each meal. But Jesus told them that neither acts of charity nor of devotion can be well timed if they obstruct men in their duty to their parents, which was the case with the Pharisees. God will accept of nothing till the necessary duties are fulfilled at home. The children must never forget and neglect their parents, nor the parents their children. Whenever we are tempted thus to transgress, let us call to mind the prophecy here applied by Christ to the Pharisees—'This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.' The root of this disorder is in the heart. There let us check sin in the outset. Let us repent of it in its source. Let us serve God with such fear and love as no outward acts can signify, no words can adequately express. Let us be washed, not with water, but through faith, in that blood of Christ, which alone can make us clean.

MATT. xv. 21-28.

THEN Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto Him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and besought Him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she

and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me. But He answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord : yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith : be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

THE old inhabitants of the tract of Tyre and Sidon were descendants of Canaan, not driven out by the Israelites ; for which reason this part of the country retained the name of Canaan long after it had ceased in those parts which were taken possession of by the Israelites. Hence this woman is said to be of Canaan. She was under a sore calamity ; and nothing sooner awakens, and more effectually disposes, us to implore the mercy of God, than adversity. So that calamities and afflictions may be accounted Divine favours, which, surpassing all human relief, force us to have recourse to God Himself ; to God, whom we are strangely inclined to forget in the day of prosperity.

This woman, living on the borders of the Holy Land, had both studied the Scriptures, and become acquainted with the miracles of Christ ; therefore she called Him by the titles of ' Lord ' and ' Son of David.' Jesus at first took no notice of her, though He knew and esteemed the good disposition of His petitioner, but He wished to exercise her faith and submission, her patience and perseverance, to make her virtue manifest to the bystanders, and to make her also sensible of the true value of the favour which she at last obtained. And even when He did take notice of her, to prove her faith, and make it further manifest to the disciples, He said, ' It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to dogs.' For the Jews esteemed themselves God's children, and all others no better than

dogs. And this was well understood by the woman, who, with the greatest humility, begged for the dog's portion. And what was our Lord's answer? 'O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt.' Thus she obtained the approbation of One whose praise must be so much desired by all. In like manner does our Heavenly Father deal with us. He tries our tempers by suspending His mercies. He makes us feel our dependence, and trains us up to patience and resignation, to trust and constancy; for indeed we are not worthy to receive, till we are perfectly satisfied that He is the best judge when, as well as how, and what to give; and that He proceeds upon reasons, not only wise in themselves, but beneficial to us.

MATT. xv. 29-39.

AND Jesus departed from thence, and came nigh unto the sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain, and sat down there. And great multitudes came unto Him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and He healed them: insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel. Then Jesus called His disciples unto Him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way. And His disciples say unto Him, Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude? And Jesus saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes. And He commanded

the multitude to sit down on the ground. And He took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake them, and gave to His disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets full. And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children. And He sent away the multitude, and took ship, and came into the coasts of Magdala.

THE country into which Jesus came was situated on the eastern coast of the Sea of Galilee. Here the people were made to wonder at all the miracles and cures that were performed. Now too, as before, they continued even three whole days, attending on the Divine Teacher, till they had nothing left to eat. Yet they did not complain of hunger; but left it for Jesus to say, 'I have compassion on the multitude.' Let us learn, from this example, to attempt with good will whatsoever Christ plainly bids us, and let us be content to leave the issue in the hands of Him, who has proved by these signal miracles, that He can 'prepare a table in the wilderness.' God it is who giveth the increase; even He, who out of no more provision than this, satisfied four thousand men, besides women and children; even He who hath assured us by His apostle, in regard to every good work we take in hand, that 'in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.'

Seven baskets of fragments were collected by the disciples, and this teaches us in the first place to avoid waste in all things, and secondly, we may hence be encouraged to give liberally and cheerfully, on the ground that what we so distribute will be largely restored. He that hath pity on the poor, is considered to be lending unto the Lord; and look, what he so layeth out, shall be paid him again, and shall be laid up for him in heaven for ever.

MATT. xvi. 1-12.

THE Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired Him that He would shew them a sign from heaven. He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to-day: for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times? A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And He left them, and departed. And when His disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have taken no bread. Which when Jesus perceived, He said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread? Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? Then understood they how that He bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

THOUGH the Pharisees and the Sadducees were so completely opposed to each other, yet they both agreed to tempt Jesus, by asking Him for what they thought it

was not in His power to grant, namely, some miraculous sign, such as that when Moses brought the manna from heaven, or when Elijah brought down fire, or when Joshua stayed the sun in its course, or when Isaiah caused its shadow to go backwards; but our Lord reminded them, they had already signs enough for their conviction, therefore He would only give them the sign of the prophet Jonas.

Jesus having departed out of their way took occasion from the similitude of bread to draw some useful instructions for His disciples, and bids them take care to avoid the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, meaning their doctrines and hypocrisy, which were to spread like leaven; but they having forgotten to take a supply of bread with them, hastily concluded that He referred to their neglect of provision for the body. How soon had they forgotten His two miracles of feeding many thousands on a few loaves and fishes! Never let us be guilty of such forgetfulness! Never let us, in our too anxious provision for the flesh, fail to remember that God careth for us! And let us also beware of the doctrine of these Pharisees, of their hardened unbelief, and of the specious pleas they urged, to justify themselves before Christ.

MATT. xvi. 13-28.

WHEN Jesus came into the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that Thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the

living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Then charged He His disciples that they should tell no man that He was Jesus the Christ. From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him, saying, Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee. But He turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men. Then said Jesus unto His disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then He shall reward every man according to his works. Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in His kingdom.

WE should observe here, that the true nature of our Lord was made known to the disciples only by degrees;

and while some took Him for John the Baptist, some for Elias, and some for Jeremiah, St. Peter was enlightened so as to reply, on behalf of the apostles, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.' For this confession of faith, he was highly praised by our Lord; but no sooner were the Apostles enlightened to know that Jesus was the Christ, than He put their faith to trial, by assuring them that He must in Jerusalem 'suffer many things,' and 'be killed.' St. Peter, whose thoughts were full of the glory and greatness of the Messiah, was so disturbed with what our Lord said, that he could not forbear to expostulate with Him. The Holy Jesus rebuking him, told him that he was, in the tendency, though not in the design of his words, a tempter, an adversary to Him, and influenced by human weakness, instead of religious fortitude. The self-denial which our Saviour claims from His disciples is nothing more than a willingness to part with all earthly comforts and conveniences, to quit all our temporal interests and enjoyments, and even life itself, for the sake of Him and His religion. Never was sorrow like His sorrow; yet He endured all with the greatest patience and meekness, and with the most perfect submission and resignation to the will of God. If then He thus denied Himself, well may we, who have much more cause and reason to do so. Herein will the sovereignty of Christ be exercised; herein the self-denial of His saints be approved: the life they lose will be found, the cross they bear will become a crown of glory. And death, however bitter it may be for them that have no hope in Christ! how sweet will be its taste, how welcome its arrival, to them that die in the Lord!

MATT. xvii. 1-13.

AND after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them: and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with Him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if Thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only. And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead. And His disciples asked Him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that He spake unto them of John the Baptist.

THESE three disciples, Peter, James, and John, seem to have been distinguished by our Lord's peculiar confidence, and to have generally attended Him on all impor-

tant occasions. St. John was, as we know, His beloved disciple. St. James his brother, would from that near connexion probably be brought more frequently under his Master's notice; and as St. Peter was the very person who had expressed himself with so much indignation on the subject of our Saviour's sufferings, it was peculiarly necessary that he should be admitted to the ensuing spectacle, which was calculated to calm those emotions which the first mention of them had produced in their minds. The mountain they went up is generally believed to be Mount Tabor, a short distance from Nazareth towards the east. One great purpose of this singular scene of the transfiguration seems to have been to represent the cessation of the Jewish, and the commencement of the Christian, dispensation. It was to correct the erroneous opinion which prevailed amongst the disciples, that the whole Mosaical law was to continue in full force under the Gospel. Moses and Elias were undoubtedly most proper representatives of the Law and the Prophets; but the gracious words which issued from the cloud most clearly explained the meaning of what was passing before the eyes of the disciples. The conclusion, too, of the whole scene, harmonised with this declaration: Moses and Elias instantly disappeared, and when 'the disciples lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.' The former objects of their veneration were no more; Christ remained alone, their unrivalled and undisputed Sovereign. Let us then live, as He would have us, who is in heaven. Let us listen, though we hear no voice; let us listen as though we heard it; let us listen in all we say, and do, and think, to the voice of God's beloved Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

MATT. xvii. 14-27.

AND when they were come to the multitude, there came to Him a certain man, kneeling down to Him, and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son : for he is lunatic, and sore vexed : for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. And I brought him to Thy disciples, and they could not cure him. Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me. And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour. Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting. And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men: and they shall kill Him, and the third day He shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry. And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute? He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers? Peter saith unto Him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free. Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast

opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee.

THE disciples had in vain tried to cure this poor lunatic. Their failure arose from this, that both in themselves, and in the friends of the person afflicted, there was a want of faith. Our Saviour reproved them, and assured them that, if they had faith as a grain of mustard seed, that is, even the smallest degree of real, lively faith, they would be able to remove mountains, or, in other words, to do miracles as marvellous; for nothing would be impossible to them. But He adds, that God does not grant this power except to those whose faith is strengthened by the most earnest prayer, and accompanied with the greatest devotion. Let us then believe that we have grace to conquer, and behold, we, through grace, shall become conquerors.

Again does our Lord remind His disciples of what must befall Him; but there was nothing, which they were so reluctant to believe, as that He should suffer, and nothing which He was more anxious to impress upon their minds. They were grieved at having their expectations of glory in this life so completely overthrown. Let us take warning, lest we look too much at the things of the present world; and let us remember that we, too, 'must suffer with Christ, if we would also be glorified together.' Let us not then be 'exceeding sorry,' but let us be glad of all the ills which God thinks fit to deal to us; trusting that through His grace they will work together for our good, and striving that they may do so by our 'patient continuance in well-doing.'

MATT. xviii. 1-14.

AT the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh! Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell-fire. Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven. For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost. How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.

Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.

It appears, from a parallel passage of St. Mark, that the disciples had been disputing in the way, 'who should be the greatest,' meaning, who, among the twelve apostles, should be the superior in Jesus' kingdom. But Christ at once told them that, unless a total change took place in their tempers and dispositions, they could not enter into the kingdom of heaven, nor would they be capable of inheriting the rewards of His kingdom hereafter; for, in the eye of God, true humility is a great virtue; and whosoever shall humble himself as a little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Take care then, He said, that ye do not treat with scorn or contempt such little children as ye now see before you, or those believers in Me who resemble these children in docility, meekness, and humility; for however contemptibly ye may think of them, your heavenly Father regards them with a more favourable eye. He even condescends to take them under His protection; He sends even His most favoured angels to guard and watch over these little children, and those humble Christians who are like them in purity and innocence of mind; for, as our Lord adds, the very purpose for which the Son of God came into the world, was to seek and bring back those who had strayed away. And though we are not to infer from this similitude that God sets *more* value on one repenting sinner than on many righteous persons who have uniformly and devoutly served Him, yet the meaning of this parable is, that God's parental tenderness extends to all, even to the sinner that goes astray, and that He rejoices alike at the recovery and conversion of the meanest individual and most grievous offender.

MATT. xviii. 15–35.

MOREOVER if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone : if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church : but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven : and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. Then came Peter to Him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him ? till seven times ? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times : but, Until seventy times seven. Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence : and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat,

saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

WE here find that our Lord made evident allusions to the laws and customs of the Jews; but His obvious meaning in regard to ourselves is, that even towards those who may have ill-treated or injured us, we should behave with the greatest moderation and mildness, which virtues characterise all our Saviour's precepts, and more particularly distinguish those recorded in this chapter. Great is the inducement He has here set forth for us to dwell together in unity. St. Peter seems to have thought that he offered much in proposing to forgive his brother until seven times, but our Lord's reply was, 'I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven,' meaning, a number without limit; and this reply He enforces by a parable, in which we may remark the proportion between our trespasses against God, and those of men amongst each other. They are as ten thousand talents to an hundred pence. No proportion can indeed adequately express what is due from a creature who offends, to a Father who preserves, supports, and bears with him;

from a bondsman to a Redeemer, who died for his sake ; from a sinner to the Holy Spirit, who makes him holy. We are indeed forgiven through Christ ; ought not we then to forgive as we have been forgiven ? May the sense of the love we have received constrain us out of love, rather than fear, to love, to help, to forgive each other ; and if yet we harbour in our hearts a thought of bitterness, may we discharge it from there for ever !

MATT. xix. 1-15.

AND it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these sayings, He departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judæa beyond Jordan ; and great multitudes followed Him ; and He healed them there. The Pharisees also came unto Him, tempting Him, and saying unto Him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause ? And He answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that He which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife : and they twain shall be one flesh ? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto Him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away ? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives : but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery : and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery. His disciples say unto Him, If the case of the man be so with his wife,

it is not good to marry. But He said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given. For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it. Then were there brought unto Him little children, that He should put His hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven. And He laid His hands on them, and departed thence.

THE coast of Judea, beyond Jordan, was that part of the country first occupied by the Jewish tribes. It was therefore to be expected that Jesus would there preach to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Many followed Him, and frequented His teaching. The Pharisees also came unto Him, tempting Him, that they might find somewhat to lay to His charge. With this view they asked Him, what cause might justify a man in putting away his wife. Christ referred them to the institution of marriage as set forth at the beginning of the book of Genesis. He points out how God had sanctioned marriage, and mentions what God said,—‘Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.’ So also our Lord here concludes from their being pronounced by God to be one flesh, that no man must dare to put them asunder; for Moses only permitted this course in some cases, because of the hardness of their hearts. It was one which was not known ‘from the beginning,’ that is, before the time of Moses. It was one which they had in practice grossly abused. It was one

which He therefore now limits very strictly in the Gospel to a single and extreme case.

The disciples are again here reminded how amiable in the sight of God is the disposition of children. His words here afford considerable sanction to the practice in our Church of infant baptism. And very forcibly does He recommend us, as a point of Christian duty, to aid the helplessness of children, to bear with their waywardness, and to instruct them with patience, kindness, and attention. But chiefly does He enforce the doctrine which He had already laid down, that we must be ourselves in disposition like to little children, if we would enter the kingdom of heaven.

MATT. xix. 16-30.

AND, behold, one came and said unto Him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And He said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto Him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. The young man saith unto Him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions. Then said Jesus unto His disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall

hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible. Then answered Peter and said unto Him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed Thee; what shall we have therefore? And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life. But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.

FROM these words of our Saviour we especially learn, what manner of works they are which spring out of true faith, and lead faithful men to everlasting life. This young man inquired of Jesus, what he should do to inherit eternal life, but not being satisfied with our Lord's reply, he then asked which commandments he should keep? To this Christ made a plain answer, rehearsing some of the commandments, so that this is to be taken as a truth taught by Christ's own mouth, that the works of the commandments of God are the true works of faith, which lead to the blessed life to come. The young man professed that he kept them from his youth up. He had yet, however, to learn their extent and perfection; for when Jesus required him to sell all he had, and give to the poor, and follow Him, he went away sorrowful, for he had large possessions. He was not disposed to purchase even

treasures in heaven at the price of all he possessed on earth. The one thing he yet lacked ; and he was unwilling to do this one thing ; he loved not his neighbour as himself, he loved not God with all his heart. How ‘hardly shall a rich man enter into the kingdom of heaven’ is most plainly expressed by a proverb familiar in a country where camels were in use, and where they were the largest known animal. But, difficult and impossible as it may be to us, yet ‘with God all things are possible,’ and with His spiritual aid, and in the faith of His redeeming love, every trial, alike of abundance or want, of affliction or enjoyment, may, by His mercy, turn to our profit and end in our glory. For to all, in every country, and in every age, to all is extended the like gracious promise. Plead with God, not your own but Christ’s worth. Plead with Christ—believe in Him—love Him—love to do what He would have you do. You will then be counted to have forsaken much for Christ. And, however here you may be taken for the last, you may hope by Him to be exalted among the first hereafter.

MATT. XX. 1-16.

FOR the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an housholder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said unto them ; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others

standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right that shall ye receive. So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house, saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.

THIS parable is intended to illustrate the expression which concluded the last chapter. The kingdom of heaven, that is, the dealings of God with mankind through Christ, are compared to those of a householder hiring labourers into his vineyard. He agreed with the first for a certain sum, and then gave the full amount of that sum to all, whether they worked for him one hour or twelve. At this, those who had worked the longest murmured; but as they had just what they agreed for, they had no right to find fault with him for doing what he would with his own. Thus it is with ourselves. Christians perform services during periods of different length; some go to rest in early youth, some labour in the vine-

yard till extreme old age ; some serve God from their youth up, some are not converted till their life is far advanced ; but in all these several cases God doeth what He will with His own, and yet giveth each ‘whatsoever is right.’ It is not with the all-wise God as with an earthly master ; He considers all circumstances, makes allowance for necessary hindrances, looks at the men as well as at the work, at their tempers, dispositions, heartiness, and forwardness in what they do ; and, upon the whole, balances the account with an unerring exactness. We should all then learn from this parable that our heavenly wages bear no such exact proportion to the extent of our services on earth, as we are apt in our pride to imagine. We should deeply feel them to be the free gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. For whether we be first or last, so we are but in the end through His mercy ‘chosen,’ the reward is no reward of ours, but His, and His only, who hath bought both it for us, and us for Himself, through His most precious blood.

MATT. XX. 17-28.

AND Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem ; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify Him : and the third day He shall rise again. Then came to Him the mother of Zebedee’s children with her sons, worshipping Him, and desiring a certain thing of Him. And He said unto her, What wilt thou ? She saith unto Him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on Thy right hand, and the other on the left, in

Thy kingdom. But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto Him, We are able. And He saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father. And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren. But Jesus called them unto Him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.

NOTWITHSTANDING our Lord's repeated notice of His sufferings, the disciples still understood so little of what His kingdom was to be that the sons of Zebedee applied, through their mother, to obtain in it the places of most distinguished honour. Our Saviour tells them, they know not what they ask. He informs them that places of honour in His kingdom imply eminence of pains and trouble here on earth, drinking of his cup of affliction, and being baptized with the baptism, that is, the sorrow and suffering, He was to be baptized with. Every Christian will then be exalted to a higher degree of bliss and glory, in proportion as he has drunk deeper of Christ's cup. As his humility, his sufferings, patience, and meek disposition, have brought him to a nearer conformity with his Master; so shall he be considered and placed nearest to Him in happiness. The rest of the Apostles were moved

with indignation against James and John for making this request; but our Lord in His answer says, 'I allow of no strife among you for place or station; no selfish or ambitious views; all the contention must be, who shall be most charitable and humble, and the most diligent in kind services to his fellow-members of my family.' Then did the Divine Teacher point to His own conduct, for a pattern of what He would have us do. This then is our pattern. For who could be more high than He, the Son of God? Yet who more lowly than that Son of man, who went about doing good, who had not where to lay His head? We should go about doing good. And the less we are selfish, irritable, or proud, the nearer we shall be to Christ's right hand in His kingdom that shall be revealed.

MATT. XX. 29-34.

AND as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed Him. And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way-side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, Thou Son of David. And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, Thou Son of David. And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I shall do unto you? They say unto Him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened. So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him.

A GREAT multitude now followed Jesus; their numbers increased as they approached Jerusalem, where it is pro-

bable they expected something would befall Him. He took therefore this occasion of working a very signal miracle on two blind men who were sitting by the way-side. Blind as they were, they had attained a degree of faith, such as many failed to feel who had all their senses perfect. So Jesus had compassion on them. No miracle can illustrate the spiritual effect of the Gospel on the human heart so much as the giving sight to the blind. By nature, we are all heart-blind. We are not able to discern our real good from our greatest evil. We can neither find, nor keep the path which leadeth unto life eternal. Let us endeavour, (as the very ground of our hope of being healed,) to have faith in Christ. Then will He have compassion on us, and touch our benighted eyes. Grant, 'Lord, that our eyes may be opened' to behold through faith the things that are invisible; to seek Thy will in all we do, to see Thy hand in all we meet with, Thy chastisements in our sufferings, Thy goodness in our joys, and, above all, Thy mercy in the saving of our souls.

MATT. xxi. 1-11.

AND when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples, saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me. And if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them. All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee,

meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass. And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them, and brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set Him thereon. And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way. And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest. And when He was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.

FROM what St. John tells us in his Gospel, it appears that the time of Christ's solemn entry into Jerusalem was five days before the Passover. Bethphage was a village near Jerusalem, on the Mount of Olives. The Mount of Olives, so called from the olive-trees which grew upon it, lay near Jerusalem to the east, and was separated from it by the brook Kedron. We should here remark the Divine knowledge and power of our blessed Lord: the former, in foretelling where and in what manner His disciples should find the beasts required for the occasion: the latter, in inclining the hearts of persons at a distance, to so ready a compliance with His commands. At the time predicted by the prophets, not only Jerusalem looked for a completion of the prophecies, but the whole earth sat still, expecting that Judea would give her a King. And lo! the promised King of the Jews is born of the royal house and lineage of David. All the circumstances of His birth, the words of His mouth, and the actions of His life, demonstrate Him to be the Messiah foretold by the prophets from the beginning of the world. He cometh to His own; and Jerusalem is commanded to rejoice and shout; but His own receive Him not: and Jerusalem turns a

deaf ear to the voice of all her prophets, not suffering herself to believe that anything said by them could refer to Jesus of Nazareth. With what different sensations are the members of the Christian Church affected when they hear the words of Zechariah, 'Behold thy King cometh unto thee,' and when they read the history of their accomplishment. With inexpressible delight we carry back our thoughts to that happy era, when the King of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews, made His appearance in the flesh. We know that this is He to whom all the prophets give witness; and that He hath fulfilled these things which were written of Him. We know that He hath overcome our enemies, and triumphed gloriously, that He hath erected an universal and everlasting kingdom, and given laws to the world; nay, that He doth govern all things in heaven and earth!

MATT. xxi. 12-22.

AND Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves, and said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves. And the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple; and He healed them. And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the son of David; they were sore displeased, and said unto Him, Hearest Thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise? And He left them, and went out of the

city into Bethany; and He lodged there. Now in the morning as He returned into the city, He hungered. And when He saw a fig-tree in the way, He came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig-tree withered away. And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig-tree withered away! Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig-tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

THE first thing Jesus did, 'when He was come into Jerusalem,' was to visit the temple. In no place was He so much concerned, as in the house of prayer, to show forth His power and truth, and nowhere is He so sure to hear our prayers, than in the congregation of faithful Christians. To the building in which we worship we should thus apply His solemn warning, 'My house shall be called the house of prayer.' Let us then take heed that we never, when in church, allow our thoughts to wander. In the temple Jesus healed the blind and lame. Thus, when He receives our penitence and hears our prayers, in the Christian congregation, He makes by His power our blind souls to see, and guides our feeble steps into the ways of holiness and peace. In the miracle of the Fig Tree we have a warning of hearing without faith, or having faith without the fruit of works. No encouragement is here given to any enthusiastic notion of the power of faith: it is only a strong figurative expression, signifying that by a firm and lively trust in God, the disciples would be enabled to work the greatest miracles. See then, when you pray, that you pray with faith; with

faith which looks ever for things spiritual; with faith which nothing doubts but that God will give them; with faith which waits patiently His good time; with faith which all the while it waits, is able to rejoice in hope. If you thus ask, you will receive. Not perhaps just what you ask, but what He knoweth is best for you.

MATT. xxi. 23-32.

• **A**ND when He was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto Him as He was teaching, and said, By what authority doest Thou these things? and who gave Thee this authority? And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; He will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet. And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And He said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things. But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not; but

the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.

THE question which the chief priests and elders asked our Lord, was not for the sake of information, but with a view to ensnare Him, and to frame a charge against Him. He, in return, asks them also a question, which, as it completely silenced and confounded these malicious Scribes and Pharisees, by containing a secret conviction and reproof of their unreasonable unbelief in rejecting John the Baptist, so it pointed out the reasonableness of His not returning a positive answer to their question, since it was evident that they who believed not John the Baptist, whom yet they dared not expressly deny to be sent from God, would much less have believed Jesus' plain assertion of His own Divine authority. Our Saviour, by a parable, points out the justice of God, in utterly rejecting the chief priests and elders with all their pretences of religion, and receiving in their stead the penitent Gentiles. This should, therefore, frequently engage our attention. A family such as our own, in which the reading of the Scriptures, and the duties of devotion, are openly observed, needs often to be warned, that we are not therefore sure to be more near to God, than such as are reckoned the most profligate of mankind. When then we read of publicans and harlots going into the kingdom of heaven before respectable Pharisees, we should lay to heart these profitable conclusions. First that it is not for our own works' sake, but out of God's free gift, that any of us shall be saved at all. Secondly, that however great may have been our sins, we may be justified through God's grace, by faith in Christ. And thirdly, that when we would estimate our faith by its fruits, we must try our works, not by comparison with our neighbour's, but by what we know

of God's will from God's word ; and by what we might know of it more by God's grace, than we do, if we would obey it better and love it more.

MATT. xxi. 33-46.

HEAR another parable : There was a certain holder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country : and when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first : and they did unto them likewise. But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir ; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen ? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons. Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner : this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes ? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken : but on whomso-

ever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard His parables, they perceived that He spake of them. But when they sought to lay hands on Him, they feared the multitude, because they took Him for a prophet.

THERE is no allegory in Scripture more frequent or more significant than that which represents the Church of God under the figure of a vine or a vineyard. In this parable the householder represents Almighty God. The vineyard is the covenant of His mercy through Christ. The husbandmen are the children of Israel to whom that covenant was especially entrusted. The servants whom they killed are the prophets who were sent to warn them to give the fruits of a holy and good life; and the son, who was sent last of all, was Jesus Christ, our Lord. The ingratitude and insolence of the husbandmen here represented, constrained even these hearers to acknowledge it a most fit thing that the Lord of the vineyard should dispossess and destroy those wretches, and provide himself with other husbandmen more true to their trust, and more sensible of the honour of having it reposed in them. Hitherto the Chief Priests and Pharisees seem not to have been aware that they were condemning themselves; but Christ brings home to them the parable by adding the words of a prophecy from the Psalms,—‘The same stone which the builders refused, is become the head stone in the corner;’ and also by saying further, ‘The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.’ The Pharisees, when they perceived that He spake of them, instead of paying more heed to His awful words, sought only more eagerly to lay hands on Him. Let us then ever try to see what may most apply to ourselves. Let us ascribe to His goodness all that here we have. And when called on

to give it up, let us still remember that all we then hope for is His gift also. And, above all things, let us reverence His Son. And as that Son died for us on the cross, let us reverence Him by a devout and lively faith in the atonement of His most precious death.

MATT. xxii. 1-14.

AND Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: and the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the ser-

vants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen.

THE principal object of this parable is to represent, under the image of a marriage feast, the invitation given to the Jews to embrace the Gospel; their rejection of that gracious offer, the severe punishment inflicted on them for their ingratitude and obstinacy, and the admission of the heathens to the privileges of Christianity in their room. For the Jews not only treated with contempt the words of eternal life, but pursued with unceasing rancour the first preachers of the Gospel, and persecuted them even unto death. The terrible devastation our Lord here predicts in general terms, and represents as the judgment of God on this perverse and obstinate people, for their rejection of the Christian religion, points out in the plainest manner the besieging of Jerusalem, and the destruction of that city, with an immense number of its inhabitants, by the Roman armies under Vespasian and Titus. Allusion is also here made to the calling in of the Gentiles or heathens to the privileges of the Gospel, after they had been haughtily rejected by the Jews. The first calling was made by St. Peter in the instance of Cornelius, and afterwards extended to the Gentiles at large by him and the other apostles. And to this gracious invitation, no exceptions, no distinctions were to be made. The servants gathered together all that they found both good and bad; men of all characters and descriptions were to have the offers of mercy and salvation made to them, even the very worst of sinners, for it was to these chiefly that our Saviour came, to call to repentance. Considered in a moral and practical light, this parable should teach us the necessity of adorning the soul with all Christian graces and virtues, that we may always be in

a due state of preparation to approach God in any act of religion, and also to stand before Him with humble confidence in the day of judgment.

MATT. xxii. 15--22.

THEN went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle Him in His talk. And they sent out unto Him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that Thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest Thou for any man: for Thou regardest not the person of men. Tell us therefore, What thinkest Thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not? But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto Him a penny. And He saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto Him, Cæsar's. Then saith He unto them, Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's. When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left Him, and went their way.

IN order to understand the insidious nature of the question here proposed to Jesus, it must be observed that the Jews at this time, being under the dominion of the Romans, paid them an annual tribute in money, as an acknowledgment of their subjection. The Pharisees, however, were adverse to the payment of this tribute, and contended that, as they were the peculiar people of God, and He their only rightful Sovereign, they ought not to pay tribute to any foreign prince whatever. There were

many others who maintained a contrary opinion ; and it was a question much agitated among different parties. The Herodians, as is plain from their name, were attached to Herod ; and as he was a friend to the Roman government, they probably maintained the propriety of paying the tribute. The Pharisees conceived it impossible that Jesus could extricate Himself from the dilemma into which they had brought Him, being persuaded that He must, in answering them, either render Himself odious to the Jewish people, or, on the other hand, give offence to the emperor. The manner, however, in which our Saviour points out in His reply the perfect consistency between civil obedience to men and pious homage to God, is truly admirable. Here we see that the Christian religion comes in as a most powerful auxiliary to the civil magistrate, and lends the entire force of its sanctions to the established government of every country : an advantage of infinite importance to the peace and welfare of society.

MATT. xxii. 23-33.

THE same day came to Him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked Him, saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. Now there were with us seven brethren : and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother : likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. And last of all the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven ? for they all had her. Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For

in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at His doctrine.

THE object of the Sadducees here related was to show the absurdity and the falsehood of these doctrines of a resurrection and a future state, by pointing out a difficulty respecting them, which they conceive to be insuperable. Our Lord shows them notwithstanding, that in this their doctrine they erred, 'not knowing the scriptures, and the power of God.' His power has prepared for those who rise again to life, a heaven which far exceeds the utmost happiness of this present world; one in which 'they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God.' He shows them how they might have found in the Scriptures very significant hints that those who die are not altogether dead; but though dead to the world are alive with God. Here then does our Lord very signally bring 'life and immortality to light.' Here He makes it the great topic of appeal to the hopes and fears of all. The life of man on earth we here learn to reckon but as a moment, when compared with eternity: and its purest and highest pleasures, even those of domestic love, are not worthy of a place in the consummation of that bliss which may so soon be ours in heaven. That change may be to us, if it be not our own fault, from corruption to incorruption, from dishonour to glory. Let us then give God thanks for His mercy; let us thank Him with our lives, and especially let us strive to keep holy both body and soul against the day when they may obtain a better resurrection, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

MATT. xxii. 34-46.

BUT when the Pharisees had heard that He had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together. Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked Him a question, tempting Him and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is He? They say unto Him, The son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call Him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou on my right hand, till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool? If David then call Him Lord, how is He his son? And no man was able to answer Him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask Him any more questions.

It seems to have been a maxim received among the Scribes and Pharisees, that such a multiplicity of precepts as the Law contained was too much for any one to observe; and therefore all that would be required was, that each should select to himself one or two great and important duties, on account of which, if inviolably observed, his transgressions in other respects would be overlooked. Our Saviour had already sufficiently answered the question proposed to Him, by saying that the love of God was the great commandment in the law, but we must by no means infer that it ever is or can be inconsistent with the second;

for, in fact, the love of our neighbour proceeds from the love of God. In all cases where our duty towards our neighbour is clear and plain, we may be certain that our duty to God concurs with it. It is the design of our Lord's promises to encourage us in the constant and sincere performance of these duties, notwithstanding the many temptations we meet with to the contrary, by offering to us greater assistances, and proposing greater rewards, to the performances of them, than mankind had ever yet heard of. And lastly, it was the design of His whole life and conversation in the world, to give us a true pattern and example of love to God and man in all the several instances wherein it is our duty to express it. Let us then in all things aim at true Christian love: let us remember how God first loved us, and hence learn both how to love God Himself, and how, for His sake, and Christ's, to love one another.

MATT. xxiii. 1-12.

THEN spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be born, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do for to be seen of men; they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments. And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your

Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.

OUR Saviour now proceeds in a finished model of Divine eloquence, to utter His last, most animated, dignified, and severe censure on the Pharisees; in which, no longer acting on the reserve, when His hour was come, He boldly and authoritatively denounced repeated woes on the Scribes and Pharisees for their complicated vices, their hypocrisy, ostentation, pride, arrogance, extortion, rapacity, and long-continued persecution of the prophets, from the earliest times to the sacrilegious murder of one of the last and greatest, Zechariah; concluding with the prediction of the desolation of their temple, and the withdrawing of His presence, till their final conversion. Our Lord instructs His hearers to distinguish between the public and private character of the teachers. He shows them that the men who say and do not, should never be followed as examples, but at the same time, Christians are bound to observe whatever their authorised ministers and pastors shall deliver out of the word of God, and to consider every holy ordinance as valid, which they shall perform agreeably to the institution of Christ, even though their character should not be wholly conformable to the duties which they teach. Our Saviour here displayed the same preference for the meek and humble character which He had done before, in His repeated correction of the ambition of His disciples; His frequent admonitions that greatness was to consist in humility; His censure of that love of distinction, and greediness of superiority, which the chief

persons among His countrymen were wont to display, and it is worthy of observation, that no one sentiment of our Lord's is so frequently repeated as this, which occurs at least ten times in the Evangelists.

MATT. xxiii. 13-33.

BUT woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men : for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer : therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte ; and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves. Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing ; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor ! Ye fools and blind : for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold ? And, whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing ; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty. Ye fools and blind : for whether is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifieth the gift ? Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon. And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by Him that dwelleth therein. And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by Him that sitteth thereon. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith : these ought ye to

have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?

IN this last address of our Lord to the Scribes and Pharisees, every one must be struck with the severity of His reproofs; His rebukes were stern, but just; indignant, but dictated by virtuous indignation; earnest and vehement, but the grave language of insulted Majesty, of perfect goodness detesting vice, and of perfect knowledge penetrating all its disguises and aggravations. The judgments which our Saviour denounces in this passage were temporal, such as were likely to reclaim the Jews, such as they had provoked God to send upon them, by not only imitating, but far exceeding and filling up the measure of their fathers' iniquities, by withstanding a clearer light, crucifying the Son of God, and murdering those that

bore testimony to His resurrection. Thus, we should well observe, in vindication of the justice of Providence, that every man's own sins are the true and proper cause of his own punishments. But let us take heed, when we hear of the guilt of others, that we say not in our hearts, we would not have done the like. Have we never heard in vain the word of God? Have we never neglected the warnings of His prophets? Have we never been near to crucify His blessed Son afresh? We are men of common nature, and like passions with the worst; and were we to be tempted as they have been, how know we but our fall would be as great?

MATT. xxiii. 34-39.

WHEREFORE, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

THE prophecies here pronounced by Jesus Christ were exactly fulfilled in the conduct of the Jews, and in the signal destruction of Jerusalem. They stoned St. Stephen, they cut off St. James with the sword; they scourged St. Peter and the other apostles, and they persecuted St. Paul and St. Barnabas from city to city. And for this did our Lord denounce on them their final desolation, the destruction of their city, and their dispersion at this very day amongst all nations. These are fearful warnings of the certainty and severity of Divine retribution. In this His last warning to the Jewish rulers, He reminds them how many times He had endeavoured to reclaim them from their sins; how earnestly He had desired to gather them under His protection, 'even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings,' and they would not! It was their will to reject His kindness. Let us then choose of our own selves the better part, and pray God to give us grace, that we may choose effectually, and joyfully receive the glad tidings of salvation. Sensible of our own utter unworthiness let us cast on Him all our care, lay before Him all our burdens, and seek from Him all our strength. Sensible of His great mercy in thus saving us, let us conform our will to His; give Him our whole heart; give up to His service our whole life; and say joyfully, even when death shall come, 'Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.'

MATT. xxiv. 1-14.

AND Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and His disciples came to Him for to shew Him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There

shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. And as He sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto Him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

THIS chapter contains one of the clearest and most important prophecies that is to be found in the sacred writings; that which our blessed Lord delivered respecting the destruction of Jerusalem, to which the whole of this chapter in its primary acceptation refers. At the same time we must all bear in mind that the forms of expression and images employed are for the most part applicable also to the day of judgment; and our Saviour holds out the destruction of Jerusalem as a type of the dissolution of the world. From the magnitude and ap-

parent solidity of the temple, it seemed most improbable that it should ever be thrown down. In the superstructure there were stones of the whitest marble upwards of 67 feet long, more than 7 feet high, and 9 broad. And in the accounts of St. Mark and St. Luke it is mentioned that the disciples particularly pointed out to Him 'the goodly stones.' This circumstance gives peculiar force to our Saviour's prediction here, which was fulfilled almost in a literal sense after the decease of St. Matthew and St. Mark, and probably of St. Luke likewise, so that there can be no possible suspicion of the prophecy having been contrived after the event; and as by its fulfilment we should be warned of the approaching destruction of the world, let us daily watch as though it were close at hand, and wait for it patiently, however long it may be delayed, for God will in His good time fulfil His word of truth. And as we have now wars and pestilence, false prophets, and abundance of iniquity, so surely will there be an end of evil: and he that shall endure unto it in faith and love, 'the same shall be saved.'

MATT. xxiv. 15-28.

WHEN ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whoso readeth, let him understand :) then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains: let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house: neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: for then shall be great tribu-

lation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved : but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there ; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders ; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, He is in the desert ; go not forth : behold, He is in the secret chambers : believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west ; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

OUR Lord here goes on to point out still more alarming and more evident indications of the near approach of danger to the Jewish nation. He bids His disciples be sure to fly out of the city as soon as they should see in the holy place, or near to the temple, and the mount on which it stood, the abomination of desolation, which here means the Roman army. For by that army was the city made desolate. These kind admonitions of our Saviour were not lost upon the disciples. For we learn from the best ecclesiastical historians, that when the Roman armies approached Jerusalem, all the Christians left that devoted city and fled to Pella, a mountainous country, and to other places beyond the river Jordan. Josephus, too, informs us, that when Vespasian was drawing his forces towards Jerusalem, a great multitude fled from Jericho into the mountainous country for their security. 'But for the elect's sake,' adds our Lord, 'those days shall be shortened.' And this is a mercy, which will help also, we hope, to mitigate the like suffer-

ings that are to come upon earth, before the great and terrible day of the Lord. How then should it add life to our faith, and fervour to our devotion, to think that for our sakes, if faithful and devout, 'those days shall be shortened.' And whenever we are pressed by the temptations that do so easily beset us, let us think how loathsome sin will seem when our Lord shall shine forth like the lightning in the heavens, suddenly, fearfully, and gloriously.

MATT. xxiv. 29-41.

IMMEDIATELY after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. Now learn a parable of the fig-tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before

the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away ; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field ; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill ; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

THIS prophecy, as it draws towards a close, points almost entirely to that coming of Christ, at the end of the world, in which we are all most deeply concerned. Of that awful advent we cannot possibly know more than what God has been pleased in His word to reveal. Nor has He told us these particulars by way of satisfying our vain curiosity, but in order to raise in us a wholesome fear, and continual watchfulness. ‘The sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light ;’ and when ‘the sign of the Son of man’ shall appear, it shall become most evident that Jesus was the true and only Messiah, and the Jews shall lament and mourn, and be forced to acknowledge the power, and glory, and majesty of Christ, who will then send forth His ministers among the Gentiles, and will gather into one body those who believe and obey His Gospel, from among ‘all the nations of the earth.’ In like manner at the end of the world, after long persecutions and afflictions of the Church, and after great disturbances and revolutions in all nations of the world, Christ will at last appear in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, and He will send His angels through the world and gather together His elect, that is, all good men who have believed Him, and He will reward them with eternal life. And though it is most certain that these prophecies will be fulfilled, yet the precise time when these things shall come to pass, no one knoweth but God only. Let us then be always ready ;

and however difficult or painful may be our portion in this life, it is as likely as the most agreeable we could devise, to prove, through God's gift, our road to heaven, our way to eternal life.

MATT. xxiv. 42-51.

WATCH therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

HERE ends the prophetical part of our Lord's discourse; that which follows is altogether exhortation. He means by these declarations to remind every man that his particular doom is near; for whatever may be the season appointed in the secret counsels of God, for that great and

terrible day, when the heavens and the earth shall flee from the face of Him who shall be seated on the throne, and their place shall be no more found; whatever may be the destined time of this public catastrophe, the end of the world, with respect to every individual, takes place at the conclusion of his life. In the grave there will be no repentance, no virtues can be acquired, no evil habits thrown off. With that character, whether of virtue or of vice, with which a man leaves the world, with that he must appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. In that moment, therefore, in which his present life ends, every man's future condition becomes irreversibly determined. In this sense, to every one that standeth here, 'the coming of the Lord draweth nigh; the Judge standeth before the door.' Let us watch therefore, and pray, watch over ourselves, and pray for the succours of God's grace, that we may be able to stand before the Son of Man. Nor shall vigilance and prayer be ineffectual. On the incorrigible and perverse, on those who reject God's promises, the severity of His wrath must fall. But for those who lay these warnings seriously to heart, who fear God's displeasure more than death, and seek His favour more than life, though much of frailty will to the last adhere to them, yet these are the objects of the Father's mercy, of the Redeemer's love. For these He died, for these He pleads, these He supports and strengthens with His Spirit, these He shall lead with Him triumphant to the mansions of glory, when sin and death shall be cast into the lake of fire.

MATT. xxv. 1-13.

THEN shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

THE parables which follow are designed to carry on the subject with which the preceding chapter concludes; namely, that of the last solemn day of retribution. The object of them is to call our attention to that great event, and to warn us of the necessity of being always prepared for it. The wise virgins represent those who had not only embraced the Christian religion, but who likewise persevered in that profession, and brought forth fruits answerable to it. But even they slumbered and slept; thus too often even the best and most considerate sort of Christians are

not as watchful as they ought to be, to prepare for death and judgment. Blessed are those servants, and wise indeed, are they whose lamps always burn bright, and whom the Bridegroom when He comes shall find watching, and in a fit posture and preparation to meet Him. The patience of God will not always last; the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, and will surprise the careless world at once, and give them no time to trim up their lamps and get oil; but in an instant the door will be shut, and they shall never enter into the kingdom of God. From the complete uncertainty at what time 'the Son of man cometh,' we should be impelled immediately to reconcile ourselves to God by a sincere and hearty repentance, that the terrible day of God's wrath may not find us unprepared. We should be ever on our guard, and frequent in all acts of piety and devotion, that we may make a daily advancement towards Christian perfection. We should humbly pray to God that the day of judgment may not overtake us unawares; but that, by patient continuance in well-doing, we may wait for glory, honour, and immortality.

MATT. xxv. 14-30.

FOR the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went

and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

By a man travelling into a far country is here represented our Saviour's leaving this world, and ascending into heaven, after He had finished the great work of our

redemption ; and by his delivering to his servants his goods, is signified His strengthening His disciples with sufficient grace for the performance of their duty and service towards Him. By the lord's returning after a long time, and reckoning with the servants, is represented the coming of Christ to judgment at the end of the world, then to inquire into every man's works, and to reward or punish as there is just occasion. The pretence here made by the servant who had received one talent is false and groundless. God requires not of His servants more than He has given them power to perform. But certainly, the stricter we imagine Him to be, the more careful we ought to be in improving the talent He has committed to our charge. Hence we are instructed that he who has received much grace, must be eminent for much holiness. His piety must rise proportionably to the communications of the Holy Spirit which he enjoys, and his diligence be commensurate with his strength. He that hath received five talents, must gain other five with them ; and no man must be without some increase, though he hath received but one. Make us, blessed Lord, contented with the talent Thou hast given us, with the state of life and light to which Thou hast been pleased to call us ! Help us to be faithful over what things we have ; not to despise those who have fewer, nor to envy those who have more ; but to stir up, and improve to the uttermost, the gift that is in ourselves.

MATT. xxv. 31-46.

WHEN the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory : And before Him shall be

gathered all nations : and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats : and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world : for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink : I was a stranger, and ye took me in : naked, and ye clothed me : I was sick, and ye visited me : I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee an hungred, and fed Thee ? or thirsty, and gave Thee drink ? When saw we Thee a stranger, and took Thee in ? or naked, and clothed Thee ? Or when saw we Thee sick, or in prison, and came unto Thee ? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink : I was a stranger, and ye took me not in : naked, and ye clothed me not : sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto Thee ? Then shall He answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment : but the righteous into life eternal.

AFTER the admonitory parables which precede, containing exhortations to prepare for the last great day, our blessed Lord is naturally led on to a description of the

day itself. He represents Himself as a great and mighty King, the Supreme Lord of all, sitting on the throne of His glory, with all the nations of the world assembled before Him, and waiting their final doom from His lips. What an astonishing and stupendous spectacle is this! He then at one glance, which penetrates the heart of every individual of that immense multitude, discerns the respective merits or demerits of every human being there present, and separates the good from the bad, with as much ease as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. He proceeds to question them on one most important branch of their duty, as a specimen of the manner in which the inquiry into the whole of their behaviour will be conducted; and then, with the authority of an Almighty Sovereign and Judge, He pronounces in a few words the irreversible sentence, which consigns the wicked to everlasting punishment, and the righteous to life eternal.

Great will be the surprise, as well as the joy, of those humble Christians, who will then be exalted to glory. They are conscious that in many things they have done wrong, in many things failed to do right. But Christ accepts the imperfect service, and by the praise He gives it, points out to us the perfection He would have us aim at. May we for His sake, if thus we love and help each other, be counted among the righteous, and inherit the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world!

MATT. xxvi. 1-13.

AND it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, He said unto His disciples, Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified. Then assembled together

the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, and consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill Him. But they said, Not on the feast day, least there be an uproar among the people. Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, there came unto Him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on His head, as He sat at meat. But when His disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor. When Jesus understood it, He said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me. For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always. For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.

THE feast of the Passover began on the fourteenth day of the first full moon, in the month Nisan, and, properly speaking, lasted only one day, but the seven days of unleavened bread immediately followed, so that the entire festival lasted eight days, the whole being sometimes called, 'the feast of the Passover,' and 'the days of unleavened bread.' It seems probable that the design of the Chief Priests and Scribes, was not to apprehend Jesus till the eight days of the Paschal Feast were concluded, and when the multitude of people who came to Jerusalem for that occasion had diminished; but Judas, having come to the chief priests soon after, and made an offer of betraying Him in the night, they changed their design, and seized upon Him on the evening of the first of these eight days, intending to have Him tried and condemned in the night,

and crucified early in the morning, before the multitude of people should come together. Christ was indeed, as St. Paul declares, 'our Passover.' He was 'the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.' And when the day of our visitation shall arrive, it is only through His blood that we may escape the wrath to come. And now, whilst yet He lived, He was anointed ready for the burial, for 'there came unto Him a woman having an alabaster box, and poured it on His head as He sat at meat.' How lively was her faith in Christ! How great her zeal to count all things,—all things to her most precious,—but loss for His sake! And when the disciples blamed her for her waste, our Lord told them it was a good work she had wrought, therefore instead of blame, she was to receive abundant praise, for 'whosoever this gospel shall be preached, in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.'

MATT. xxvi. 14-25.

THEN one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, and said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver Him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. And from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him. Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto Him, Where wilt Thou that we prepare for Thee to eat the passover? And He said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples. And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the passover. Now when the even was come, He sat down with the twelve. And

as they did eat, He said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto Him, Lord, is it I? And He answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me. The Son of man goeth as it is written of Him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born. Then Judas, which betrayed Him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said.

JUDAS, it seems, was not enticed to betray His Lord and Master by the Chief Priests; but of his own accord, he offered to deliver Him up to them; and so vilely was *He* esteemed who shed His precious blood for man, that Judas was satisfied with the price usually paid for a slave or servant who was killed by a beast. So true it is that Christ took upon Him the form of a servant.

Preparations were now made by the disciples for celebrating the Passover, Christ having instructed them at what house they should make it ready. In the midst of the supper He told them the strange tidings that one of them should betray Him. Their surprise and concern must indeed have been great, for they all, except one, must have known that they had no intention to betray their Master; but 'Lord, is it I?' was a most natural question for them all to make. By our Lord's answer they might easily see who was the person meant, and by His reply to Judas, His divine foreknowledge in discovering the hidden designs of the heart was most clear. We may however do well to ask with the disciples, 'Lord, is it I?' Our answer we may find in the word of God. For there we are plainly told what persons they are who 'crucify the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame.' Let us apply to our own consciences what there we read, as the

answer of Christ Himself, and let us pray, that we may never deserve for our reply His words to Judas, 'Thou hast said.'

MATT. xxvi. 26-29.

AND as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.

WE should bear in mind that our Lord was now solemnly commemorating the Passover, the most considerable of all the sacrifices appointed under the Old Testament, and the type of the great sacrifice for sin made by 'Christ our Passover.' In the expressions therefore which He uses, He refers to the occasion present, and the objects before Him, which must be all taken into account, if we would comprehend the fulness of His meaning. It is as if He had said, You are eating the flesh of this lamb; the blood of it has been shed on the altar to make atonement. But you must now know that these things are but shadows. I am the great sacrifice, and my blood the true atonement. Eat of this bread, drink of this cup, considering them as representing my body and blood, and you shall be partakers of what was always the end and meaning of the legal passover; of this body, which is just now going to be offered in sacrifice to God for the sins of all men; of this

blood, 'without shedding of which is no remission.' These words can by no natural construction support the doctrine of Transubstantiation maintained in the Romish Church. For the words uttered by the priest cannot surely signify more than when they were uttered by Christ Himself. The bread could not be Christ's natural body, whilst He was alive; for it was His body that performed the action of breaking and giving the bread; nor could the wine in the cup be His blood, for that was still flowing in His veins. Therefore we must not take it in a literal sense, but in a figurative and spiritual one. The design of our blessed Saviour, in this institution of the Lord's Supper, was to leave to the Church a perpetual, solemn, and sacred memorial of His death for us; so that, as often as we come to the Lord's table, we may at once call to remembrance all the circumstances of His passion, and meditate on the love of Christ thus dying for us, and on the mighty benefits and advantages which we derive from it, and may we all desire, with earnest affection, to obey His last command and eat this Passover with our Lord!

MATT. xxvi. 30-46.

AND when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives. Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee. Peter answered and said unto Him, Though all men shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended. Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. Peter said

unto Him, Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee. Likewise also said all the disciples. Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith He unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. And He went a little farther, and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt. And He cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, Thy will be done. And He came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. And He left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. Then cometh He to His disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.

AFTER supper, when they were gone out to the Mount of Olives, our Lord warned His disciples, that they would be that very night offended because of Him, that is, that they would desert Him. Peter was most positive that he would not deny Him, but from his subsequent behaviour, we learn that confidence and presumption are very unpromising signs of steadfastness and perseverance in religion; that we must never trust in ourselves, but only in God. Jesus took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee with

Him into the garden of Gethsemane. These three disciples had, at His transfiguration, seen His mortal body suddenly clothed with light as with a garment; they beheld His glory, as the glory of the only begotten. They are now called upon to behold Him encompassed with the infirmities of a man, beset by the powers of darkness, and humbled under the load of our sins; and to hear the same Divine person praying in a bitter agony, as one smitten of God in His anger and afflicted unto death. Was ever sorrow like unto His sorrow, in the day when God laid on Him the iniquity of us all? How soon should this make us lament and mourn, that we should have been the occasion of so much grief and anguish! We find our Lord's resource in this last extremity was the most earnest prayer. He desired His disciples to pray, and then withdrew about a stone's cast and knelt down himself to pray. Three times He came again to His disciples and three times He returned, repeating the same words, 'Not my will, but Thine be done.' It was the greatest occasion that ever was, and the earnestness of our Lord's prayer, and the devotion of His soul, corresponded with it. Scenes of deep distress await us all, but we have our Lord's example before us: afflicted, yet resigned; grieved and wounded, yet submissive. What ought then to occupy us? Prayer, prayer the most earnest, the most urgent, repeated, continued prayer; prayer for deliverance, prayer for strength; above all, prayer for resignation.

MATT. xxvi. 47-56.

AND while He yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people.

Now he that betrayed Him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is He: hold Him fast. And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, Master; and kissed Him. And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took Him. And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear. Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be? In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me. But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook Him, and fled.

It was the custom of the Jews to salute each other, as a token of regard, or after a long absence; but how dreadful to think that with a kiss Judas betrayed his Master! Our Lord, however, bestows on him no upbraiding appellation, but simply asks him, 'Friend, wherefore art thou come?' which question must have struck the traitor with a deep conviction of his guilt. Let us beware, lest we be thus found one while to say 'Hail, Master,' and another to betray our Lord. Certain it is, that if we love Him not, so as to serve Him truly, our profession of His faith does but bring it into greater contempt. Our Saviour here reproves St. Peter, for his indiscreet zeal, in using his sword, which, by exceeding the bounds of law and order, might do injury, no less than the

traitor's kiss, to the cause of Christ. And in this instance what could human power avail? If it had been the intention of Providence, to protect Jesus and His religion by force, there is no doubt but a host of angels might have been sent to defend Him. But this would have defeated the very purpose for which He came into the world; which was, that He should 'make His soul an offering for sin.' Besides this, nothing could be more abhorrent from the spirit of His religion than force, violence, and bloodshed. The only weapons He made use of, were of a different nature; the sword of the spirit, the shield of faith, and the armour of righteousness. The Redeemer's death was the fulfilling of every sacrifice in all ages; and when at last in the fulness of time, He was offered upon the cross, He was 'the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.'

MATT. xxvi. 57-68.

AND they that had laid hold on Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. But Peter followed Him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end. Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put Him to death; but found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses, and said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days. And the high priest arose, and said unto Him, Answerest Thou nothing? what is it which these witness against Thee? But Jesus held His peace. And the high priest answered and said unto Him, I adjure

Thee by the living God, that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard His blasphemy. What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death. Then did they spit in His face, and buffeted Him; and others smote Him with the palms of their hands, saying, Prophecy unto us, Thou Christ, who is he that smote Thee?

WHAT became of the panic-struck apostles we are not informed, but two of the number, St. John and St. Peter, returned to see the event. There was no difficulty in finding out false witnesses in abundance, who were perfectly well disposed to conform to the wishes of the chief priests and elders, but the difficulty was to find some, whose evidence came up to the point they aimed at, that of charging Him with a capital crime, such as would induce the Roman governor to ratify their sentence. Failing to get any suitable proof, they then tried to ensnare Him by artful questions. 'But Jesus held His peace.' See how safe is silence against that enemy of our souls, who rejoices when we offend with our lips! Christ, being now adjured by the high-priest to say whether 'He was the Son of God,' thought Himself bound to answer with these words: 'Thou hast said,' thereby acknowledging that He was the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God. 'Nevertheless,' He added, 'ye shall shortly see a convincing evidence of it, in that wonderful and unparalleled destruction which I shall send upon the Jewish nation. Then did they offer every indignity to Him, and though He could with one word have laid them prostrate at His feet, yet

He bore all their insults without a single murmur or complaint, and never once spoke unadvisedly with His lips; 'though He was reviled, He reviled not again, though He suffered, He threatened not.' (1 Pet. ii. 23.)

MATT. xxvi. 69-75.

NOW Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest. And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man. And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee. Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.

THE reflections that crowd upon the mind from this most affecting incident of St. Peter's denial of his Master, are various and important. This event should first be well remarked, as it affords a clear and striking accomplishment of our Saviour's prediction, that before the cock crew, St. Peter should deny Him thrice; and next, as it affords a melancholy proof of the infirmity of human nature, the weakness of our best resolutions when left to ourselves, and the extreme danger of too much confiding in our own strength. That St. Peter was most warmly

attached to Jesus, that his intentions were upright, and his professions at the moment sincere, there can be no doubt. But his temper was too hot, and his confidence in himself too great. Hence we see the wisdom and the necessity of looking beyond ourselves, of looking up to heaven for support and assistance in the discharge of our duty. 'Trust then in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.' The sudden repentance of St. Peter is no less remarkable and surprising than his fall. While he was even denying his Lord with oaths and imprecations, one pitying look of his doubly suffering Master, mingled with regret, pierced him through, and melted him into tears of contrition and godly sorrow, that worketh repentance. His fall furnishes a melancholy instance of natural infirmity, even in the best of men, who presume on their own strength to resist temptation, while his speedy rising again sets before us an encouraging example of the invigorating power of Divine grace triumphing over the tempter. May we never vainly boast, never trust presumptuously in ourselves! But trusting in God through Jesus Christ, may we never be offended!

MATT. xxvii. 1-10.

WHEN the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put Him to death. And when they had bound Him, they led Him away, and delivered Him to Pontius Pilate the governor. Then Judas, which had betrayed Him, when he saw that He was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief

priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. And He cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself. And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of Him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value: and gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me.

It was related in the last chapter that the chief priests and elders had in their summary way, without the shadow of justice, decided the fate of Jesus, and pronounced Him guilty of death. Their next care was, how to get this sentence confirmed and carried into execution; for under the Roman government they had not at this time the power of life and death; though they could try and condemn a criminal, they could not execute him without a warrant from the Roman governor. They accordingly determined to carry him before Pilate, the Roman procurator of Judea at that time. Whilst Jesus was being carried away, ere yet the council had broken up, they were visited by Judas, who 'had betrayed Him.' In what follows we see the awful condition both of him who sold, and of them who bought, the life of the innocent Jesus. Judas repented himself; but he did not become a true and sincere penitent for his crime, as is shown by his dreadful end; thus crowning with suicide the murder of his Master and Friend, rejecting his compassionate Saviour, and plunging

his own soul into perdition. The rulers, who had yet time for repentance, put aside the thought with the self-righteous answer,—‘What is that to us?’ But though blind to their own pollution, they scrupled to put the silver into the treasury, because it was ‘the price of blood.’ How astonishing is the inconsistency of human nature, and how strange the contrivances by which even the most abandoned of men endeavour to satisfy their minds and quiet their consciences. Let us beware, therefore, for ourselves, lest we put off the invitation to repent, by applying to ourselves the words of these chief priests, ‘What is that to us?’

MATT. xxvii. 11–25.

AND Jesus stood before the governor: and the governor asked Him, saying, Art Thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest. And when He was accused of the chief priests and elders, He answered nothing. Then said Pilate unto Him, Hearest Thou not how many things they witness against Thee? And He answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly. Now at that feast the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would. And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas. Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ? For he knew that for envy they had delivered Him. When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him. But the chief priests and elders persuaded the

multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus. The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas. Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let Him be crucified. And the governor said, Why, what evil hath He done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let Him be crucified. When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it. Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children.

OUR Lord's conduct on this occasion was truly dignified. When He was called upon to acknowledge what was really true, He gave a direct answer both to the chief priests and to Pilate. He acknowledged that He was the Christ, the Son of God, the King of the Jews; but false, and frivolous, and unjust accusations, He treated as they deserved, with profound and contemptuous silence. It was not the custom of the Jews to release a prisoner, but this was introduced by the Roman governor as an act of grace, for the purpose of gaining popularity. The extreme reluctance of Pilate to sentence Christ, considering his merciless character, is signally remarkable. But he was unquestionably influenced by the overruling providence of God, to make the righteousness of His Son appear in the clearest light, by the fullest, the most authentic, and the most public evidence. First, by the testimony even of His judges, Pilate and Herod; secondly, by the message of Pilate's wife, delivered to him on the tribunal; thirdly, by the testimony of the traitor Judas, who hanged himself in despair for betraying the innocent blood; fourthly, by the testimony of the Roman centurion

and guard at His crucifixion to His divinity and righteousness; and fifthly, by the testimony of His fellow-sufferer on the cross. Never was innocence attested like unto His!

MATT. xxvii. 26–34.

THEN released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified. Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto Him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped Him, and put on Him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head, and a reed in His right hand: and they bowed the knee before Him, and mocked Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon Him, and took the reed, and smote Him on the head. And after that they had mocked Him, they took the robe off from Him, and put His own raiment on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him. And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear His cross. And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull, they gave Him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when He had tasted thereof, He would not drink.

It was the custom of the Romans to scourge those who were destined for crucifixion; and now our blessed Lord was condemned to die the death,—the shameful, the painful, the accursed, death on the cross; and all to redeem us from shame, from pain, and from all the curses of the law. How much do we owe to Him, our Saviour? Whenever it may be our lot to suffer,

let us turn for our comfort and direction to this view of the sufferings of our Lord. First He is scourged, then stripped, that He might the more be put to shame; then clothed in mockery with a scarlet robe, a crown as for a king put upon His head, and a reed by way of sceptre in His hand. Here we see fulfilled the account in Isaiah, lx. 6,—‘I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off my hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.’ Upon arriving at the place of execution, they gave Him ‘vinegar to drink.’ This was a draught of strong and sour wine to produce stupefaction and take away the sense of pain. Our Saviour tasted, but would not drink; He wished to show His patience and resignation to suffering. Here then we may observe the folly of attempting to stupify our sense of affliction; let us resolve with Christ to bear both our cross, and the shame and pain of it. Many are the uses of affliction, such as patience, contentment, and a thankful persuasion that all things, through God’s love, work together for our good. Let us feel our affliction to the full, that so we may use it for the best, and experience the uttermost of the blessed truth,—‘Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.’ (Heb. xii. 6.)

MATT. xxvii. 35–44.

AND they crucified Him, and parted His garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots. And sitting down they watched Him there: and set up over His head His accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING

OF THE JEWS. Then were there two thieves crucified with Him, one on the right hand, and another on the left. And they that passed by reviled Him, wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save Thyself. If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking Him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him: for He said, I am the Son of God. The thieves also, which were crucified with Him, cast the same in His teeth.

CRUCIFIXION was a death deemed so scandalous, so full of shame, that it was inflicted as the last mark of detestation on robbers, murderers, and the vilest of the people. Herein then we perceive the unspeakable condescension of our blessed Saviour, who not only vouchsafed to die for us, but disdained not the most ignominious death that the malice of His enemies could inflict; and to add to the ignominy of our Saviour's sufferings, He was crucified between two thieves. This last act of malignity, however, answered a purpose little intended by its authors; for it was the completion of the prophecy of Isaiah, in which he says of the Messiah, 'He was numbered with the transgressors,' and most numerous and minute were the circumstances expressed by all the prophecies in order to mark and certify an event in itself so little to be expected; for we read in the Psalms, David had foretold that 'They pierced His hands and His feet,' 'They stood staring and looking upon Him,' and 'They parted His garments among them, and cast lots upon His vesture.' But what love, what greater than all other love, is this, that He laid down His very life, and that in the most painful way of death,

for us, whom He hath called friends, that we might live for ever! Thus from Christ crucified, being the foundation of our Christian hope, we learn that the cross, when dispensed in affliction to ourselves, is the gift of God's love, and the mark of our being His sons by adoption of grace.

MATT. xxvii. 45-49.

NOW from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias. And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave Him to drink. The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save Him.

ALL things in heaven and in earth were moved at the sufferings and death of Christ, for a miraculous darkness came over the land from the sixth hour till the ninth, *i.e.* from noon till three o'clock. This obscuration of the sun must have been preternatural, from its extent and duration, and from the opposition of the moon to the sun, the passover being at the time of the full moon. So the light of heaven was withheld as if to signify, that He who then expired was 'the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.' And that we might the better know how much our Lord and Saviour underwent, He called out towards the end of His sufferings, in the

words of David, 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?' We are not to imagine that Jesus meant by these words to express any distrust of God's favour and kindness towards Him, or any apprehension that the light of His countenance was withdrawn from Him. This was impossible. He well knew that under the load of affliction, which, for the salvation of mankind, He voluntarily took upon Himself, He was still His heavenly Father's 'beloved Son in whom He was well pleased.' These expressions, therefore, of seeming despondence, were nothing more than the natural and almost unavoidable effusions of a mind tortured with the acutest pain. Would that in our sins and sorrows we were more solicitous lest God forsake us, than careful, as we are apt to be, for our worldly character or comfort! Would that we could feel, as did our blessed Lord for us, and as our Church teaches us to say for ourselves, that 'the remembrance of our misdoings is grievous unto us, the burden intolerable.'

MATT. xxvii. 50-54.

JESUS, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.

SUCH was the death to which the unrelenting malice of His enemies consigned the meek and holy Jesus. 'It is finished;' Thy sufferings are finished! All is finished! What remains, infinite power and infinite mercy shall accomplish. The disciples, those few of them who had the courage to be present at this dismal scene, hung their heads in sorrowful despondency, and seemed to have abandoned the hope that this was He who should redeem Israel. But Israel was redeemed. The high sacrifice appointed before the foundation of the world, typified in all the sacrifices of the law, was then slain, and was accepted. 'And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent.' Such were the convulsions into which the whole frame of nature was thrown, when the Lord of all yielded up His life! But when the centurion saw the meekness, the patience, the resignation, the firmness with which our Lord endured the most excruciating torments; when he heard Him fervently praying for His murderers, and disposing with dignity and authority of a place in paradise to one of His fellow-sufferers; when he observed the supernatural darkness, the earthquake, the rending of rocks, the opening of graves; he then burst out involuntarily into that striking exclamation, 'Truly this was the Son of God.' Here then we have a testimony to the divine character of our Lord, from one who was not prejudiced in favour of Christ and His religion, but from one who, by habit and education, was probably strongly prejudiced against them.

MATT. xxvii. 55-66.

AND many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto Him: among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children. When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathæa, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple: he went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed. And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre. Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while He was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night, and steal Him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.

It is here recorded to the especial honour of three women, amongst others, that when the disciples had fled, 'they were there beholding,' though 'afar off.' They enjoyed for their reward the sight of those wonders which attended their Master's death. And two of them we

read in what follows were the first to whom His resurrection was made known. Should we have done the same, had we been alive when He died? Let us consider how far we venture to own before men our attachment to His holy cause; how far we avow our faith, and make good our profession of love, by manfully contending under His banner against sin, the world, and the devil. Another instance of courage and fidelity is shown in Joseph of Arimathea, who wished to do as much honour to Jesus as he was permitted at that time, and especially to preserve His body from the ignominy of being cast out among those of common executed malefactors. It is particularly mentioned that Joseph was a 'rich man,' in order to point out by what a singular contrivance of Providence the prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled, that the Messiah should make His grave with the rich in His death. The tomb in which Joseph laid Him was a new one, one in which no man had been laid; it was an excavation in a rock, guarded by a band of sixty soldiers, so that there could be no ground of suspicion that our Lord did not truly rise. Here let us pause. And whilst we wait for the issue, let us reflect that in like manner our bodies must be laid in the silent grave. Our senses will cease to act, and the very friends who most love us will assist to commit us to the ground from which we are taken; for dust we are, and unto dust we must return.

MATT. xxviii. 1-10.

IN the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord de-

scended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and His raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead; and, behold, He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him: lo, I have told you. And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring His disciples word. And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held Him by the feet, and worshipped Him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

THE day of our Lord's resurrection was that on which it was before designed that He should rise. Accordingly, on this day, the sheaf of their first fruits, by which their harvest was to be consecrated, was lifted up before God among the Jews, to signify that Christ, our first fruits, should on that day be raised up by God, and so become a surety to us of our future resurrection. What a sight was there! The earth trembling; an angel descending from heaven! The guard of soldiers become through fear as dead men: and He that was crucified and died, no longer there, but risen! The same angel, at whose appearance the keepers became so much alarmed, was commissioned to comfort and say to the women who devoutly sought the Lord, 'Fear not ye.' This was their encouragement: let this also be ours. Whatever difficulties beset us, it is enough that we seek heartily 'Jesus which was crucified.' Then need we fear no harm, either in this world or the

next. But chiefly may we be set above all unworthy fear, by those other words of the angel, 'He is not here: for He is risen as He said.' With these tidings the women departed quickly to tell the disciples. And as they went, 'Behold Jesus met them, saying, All hail.' At once they knew Him, and held Him by the feet, and worshipped Him. What then will be our emotions when we shall see this same Jesus coming in the clouds of heaven, to pass sentence on all mankind? What power shall allay our terror? His own, and no other. His own, which shall say to those who now truly love Him, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' Then will their alarm be turned into joy, and their joy into such happiness as no words can express.

MATT. xxviii. 11-20.

NOW when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and showed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole Him away while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day. Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw Him, they worshipped Him: but some doubted. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and

teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

THE soldiers who kept watch had no sooner recovered from their alarm than they went to tell the Chief Priests what had happened. 'And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers.' This was by way of bribing them to give a false account of 'the things that were done.' But the story told by the guards carries collusion on the face of it. Opposed to this manifest falsehood of the soldiers, we have, in this chapter, four distinct testimonies to the resurrection of our blessed Lord: the words of the angel to the women; the appearance of Christ to them Himself; the true account which the watch gave to the elders; and, lastly, our Lord's own appearance in Galilee. Our Lord, after having finished His course of afflictions, and possessing the reward of them,—a place at the right hand of God, and the exercise of 'all power in heaven and in earth,'—has become the Author of eternal salvation to all those that obey Him. The disciples had their plain directions to teach and to baptize. Thus are we to believe in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. And in serving God we are to take for our direction whatsoever Christ has commanded us. Then will be fulfilled in us His gracious promise, 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.' With us He will be through life, strengthening us by His grace; with us, in the hour of death, He will be supporting us by the hope of His appearing; and with us, in the resurrection from the dead He will be receiving us into the brightness of His glory. Amen, so be it, blessed Lord; soon may Thy kingdom come! Amen.

THE GOSPEL OF ST. MARK.

MARK, i. 1-13.

THE beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God ; as it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before Thy face, which shall prepare Thy way before Thee. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight. John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. And there went out unto him all the land of Judæa, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins. And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins ; and he did eat locusts and wild honey ; and preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. I indeed have baptized you with water : but He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost. And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan. And straightway coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him : and there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And immediately the spirit driveth Him into the wilderness. And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan ; and was with the wild beasts ; and the angels ministered unto Him.

It has been doubted whether St. Mark the Evangelist is the same as that John, whose surname was Mark, mentioned in the Acts and in some of St. Paul's epistles. If this was so, the writer of this Gospel was the nephew of Barnabas; and it is supposed he was converted by St. Peter, who called him his son. The first mention of him is, that he went from Jerusalem to Antioch, in the year of our Lord 44, with Barnabas and Saul. Not long after he set out again with these apostles, for the purpose of preaching the Gospel; but he left them at Perga in Pamphylia and returned to Jerusalem. Afterwards, when Paul and Barnabas determined to visit the several churches they had established, Barnabas proposed taking Mark with them, to which Paul objected. This produced a sharp contention between Paul and Barnabas, which ended in their separation; and Mark accompanied his uncle Barnabas to Cyprus. Later on he went to Rome with St. Peter.

St. Mark dates the beginning of his Gospel from the preaching of John the Baptist. And this may signify to us, both that baptism is the necessary beginning of the Christian life, and that repentance for the remission of sins is the first in order of all Christian graces, the due preparation for the receiving of the rest. John did baptize, and Jesus came to be baptized of him. It is added that 'the heavens opened,' and 'the Spirit like a dove descended upon Him, and there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' He hath spoken thus of His Son. And if only we believe in Christ, if only, as faithful sons, we love and serve our heavenly Father, He hath spoken it for Christ's sake of us. For at our Christian baptism His Spirit will descend on our souls, and He will acknowledge us for sons in whom He is well pleased.

MARK, i. 14-22.

NOW after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel. Now as He walked by the sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed Him. And when He had gone a little farther thence, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets. And straightway He called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after Him. And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day He entered into the synagogue, and taught. And they were astonished at His doctrine: for He taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.

THE time which the wisdom of God predetermined, and which the ancient prophets expressly foretold, to bring in and establish the kingdom of the Messiah, is now accomplished. God is about to make the last revelation of His will to mankind, in which righteousness only and sincerity of heart will be required and accepted. Repent ye, therefore, and embrace and obey this doctrine. St. John had before called them to repentance. Jesus now calls them to the duty of faith, of which they had not before heard, when He says, 'Believe ye the Gospel. Believe the glad tidings which are now brought to you of pardon and salvation.' Let us observe from this text the

necessary connexion which subsists between faith and repentance. They are both necessary to salvation: repentance, because without it we cannot go to Christ; and faith, because without it we can receive no benefits from His atoning merits. Faith, without repentance, is nothing but a groundless presumption; and repentance, without faith in the merits of our Redeemer, can avail nothing to our salvation: we must not only repent, but we must believe the Gospel. These are the truths which the preaching of Jesus proclaims in the Galilee of this world, to them who had else sat in darkness, and in the region and shadow of death.

MARK, i. 23–35.

AND there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with Thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth? art Thou come to destroy us? I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him. And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth He even the unclean spirits, and they do obey Him. And immediately His fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee. And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered in the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell Him of her. And He came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and

immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them. And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto Him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. And all the city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew Him. And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.

How often do we find that we, like the man here mentioned with the unclean spirit, refuse to be saved, and are ready to answer the tidings of God's mercy in Christ with 'Let us alone; what have we to do with Thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth?' What else do we say, when we repine under affliction, when we murmur at the loss of wealth, health, or friends? Surely, when we experience these rebellious thoughts, they are suggested by some unclean spirit, who, though he tear not our outward frame, is defiling the soul within. The more we feel inclined to resist His will, the more let us pray and endeavour to submit to it, as entirely our own. Let not, Lord, our will, but Thine, be done. And the work which Thou hast given us to do, make us to do it with all our might. The attendance of Simon Peter on our Lord, led to the healing of his wife's mother. This shows us how numerous are the advantages of devoutly following Christ. Let us endeavour in all that we do to minister unto Christ, and to them that are His. Let us in every word and work have an eye to His glory, and to the good of those our brethren, whom He graciously reckons for His own. And like our Lord, who rose up early, went out into a solitary place, and there prayed, may we ever give our first waking thoughts to devout communion with God, and freely express to Him our

contrition, our need, our thanksgiving for need supplied, and above all, for His great goodness in the redemption of the world through the atonement of Jesus Christ.

MARK, i. 36-45.

AND Simon and they that were with Him followed after Him. And when they had found Him, they said unto Him, All men seek for Thee. And He said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also : for therefore came I forth. And He preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils. And there came a leper to Him, beseeching Him, and kneeling down to Him, and saying unto Him, If Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean. And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth His hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will ; be thou clean. And as soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed. And He straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away ; and saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man : but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places : and they came to Him from every quarter.

IN healing the leper, it should be observed that the disease he laboured under was at once most loathsome and most hopeless of cure. Our Lord only could heal it, and He alone can make us clean from the leprosy of sin,

of which this terrible disease is a fit type. From the conduct of the leper, we may learn what course we ought to pursue for this end. We must like him come to Christ with prayer, 'beseeching Him' with humility, 'kneeling down,' and with faith professing without doubt, 'If Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.' Constantly does He say to every one of us, if only we apply in humility and faith, 'I will; be thou clean.' It is His will that we be cleansed from offence, and saved from death and condemnation. Let us not then defile ourselves with sin. May our hearts be touched by the love of Christ, and our souls be made clean through His most precious blood! May our sins, forgiven for His merits' sake, and healed by His grace, no longer make us hurtful to our brethren, nor hateful in the sight of Him who is 'of purer eyes than to behold evil.' (Hab. i. 3.)

MARK, ii. 1-12.

AND again He entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was noised that He was in the house. And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and He preached the word unto them. And they come unto Him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. And when they could not come nigh unto Him for the press, they uncovered the roof where He was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay. When Jesus saw their faith, He said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee. But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who

can forgive sins but God only? And immediately when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, He said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (He saith to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house. And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.

It seems that when they were unable to carry the paralytic by the door to Jesus by reason of the crowd, they brought him to the flat roof of the house. The houses in Palestine being low and flat-roofed, consisting generally of a ground-floor only, or one upper story, are built round a paved court, into which the entrance from the street is through a gateway: the stairs which lead to the roof are usually in this gateway. It is customary to fix cords from the parapet walls of the flat roofs across this court, and upon them to expand a veil or covering as a shelter from the heat. Perhaps it was in this area that our Saviour taught. The paralytic was brought to the roof by making a way through the crowd to the stairs in the gateway, or by the terraces of the adjoining houses. They then rolled back the veil or covering, and let the sick man down the parapet of the roof, into the area or court of the house where Jesus was. 'When Jesus saw their faith,' He immediately desisted from preaching to the multitude, so that He might preach to the sick of the palsy. He first healed the inner, then the outward man. Both things were to Him alike easy. But He wished us to know that both are not alike important. We must

hence learn that the forgiveness of sin, and the health of the spirit within, ought to be the first object of our anxiety, as well in behalf of others as for ourselves. Hear, Lord, our prayers for those we love! Hear, Lord, their prayers for us! Forgive, we pray Thee, them their sin! Forgive, we pray Thee, ours!

MARK, ii. 13-28.

AND He went forth again by the sea-side; and all the multitude resorted unto Him, and He taught them. And as He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphæus sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto Him, Follow me. And he arose and followed Him. And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and His disciples: for there were many, and they followed Him. And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto His disciples, How is it that He eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners? When Jesus heard it, He saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto Him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but Thy disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days. No man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the

new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles. And it came to pass, that He went through the corn-fields on the sabbath day; and His disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn. And the Pharisees said unto Him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful? And He said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungred, he, and they that were with him? How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him? And He said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

THE disciples on the Sabbath day were contented to satisfy their hunger with the ears of corn which they gathered as they walked through the fields. The Pharisees, who ought to have had compassion on them, accused them of profaning the day of rest. Our Lord, in His reply, first justifies His disciples, and then lays down the true principle of observing the Sabbath under the Christian dispensation. Further, He declares that 'the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath.' For He is the Lord of all that has been ordained for the good of man, Himself the ordainer of it; the Son, not of man only, but of God; the Son, by whom the worlds were made; to commemorate that work of creation, to remind man, throughout all generations, of his high original at the hand of God, to refresh his body, and to prepare his weary soul for the rest of heaven: for these ends was this portion of time set apart from the beginning, and the

hallowing of this day enjoined on all mankind. As each Sabbath returns, let us remember that it was made for our good. Let us ask ourselves, as each Sabbath evening ends, Have I rejoiced in the opportunity afforded me to suspend the employments of this present world, to examine thoroughly my conduct during the week past, to confess and repent for whatever I have done amiss, and to fix my thoughts on the joys of the world to come? God grant that in this, and in all His ordinances, we may experience the excellency of His love! May He teach us, to the comfort of our souls, that in all the dispensations of the Gospel He doth not make us work more for His glory than He makes all things work for our good.

MARK, iii. 1-21.

AND He entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand. And they watched Him, whether He would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse Him. And He saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth. And He saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace. And when He had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, He saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand: And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other. And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him. But Jesus withdrew Himself with His disciples to the sea: and a great multitude from Galilee followed Him, and from Judæa, and from Jerusalem, and from Idumæa, and from

beyond Jordan ; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they heard what great things He did, came unto Him. And He spake to His disciples, that a small ship should wait on Him because of the multitude, lest they should throng Him. For He had healed many ; insomuch that they pressed upon Him for to touch Him, as many as had plagues. And unclean spirits, when they saw Him, fell down before Him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God. And He straitly charged them that they should not make Him known. And He goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto Him whom He would : and they came unto Him. And He ordained twelve, that they should be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils : and Simon He surnamed Peter ; and James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James ; and He surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder : and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphæus, and Thaddæus, and Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed Him : and they went into an house. And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. And when His friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on Him : for they said, He is beside Himself.

It was again on another Sabbath day that our Lord cured a man with a withered hand, and again the Pharisees were ready to blame Him. Angry at their obstinate malice, and grieved at their incurable blindness, that they would not receive His gracious assistance, He appealed to them as to which was the best method of keeping the Sabbath and the most acceptable to God ; to do a good work of great necessity and charity, or to neglect doing it on pretence of resting on the Sabbath. But they turned

from Him, went forth, and took counsel how they might destroy Him. His time of suffering not being yet come, He withdrew Himself from the dominions of Herod on the western side of the Sea of Galilee to those of Philip on the eastern side, and there He performed many miracles. We here read also of the first ordination or appointment of ministers by our Lord in the calling of His disciples. By their living with Him, they were enabled to learn His doctrine, to remember His sayings, so as to be able to bear true witness to His death and resurrection. May all those who are now, like the apostles, appointed to His ministry, be with Christ, and go forth and preach in His name; for as ministers, they derive their authority from Him, and on this account they are entitled to the respect of their flock. But we must never forget that, though the treasure is in 'earthen vessels,' the vessels are only to be had in honour for the treasure's sake, and for His sake who hath committed it to their care.

MARK, iii. 22-35.

AND the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth He out devils. And He called them unto Him, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan? And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end. No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house. Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of

men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation: because they said, He hath an unclean spirit. There came then His brethren and His mother, and, standing without, sent unto Him, calling Him. And the multitude sat about Him, and they said unto Him, Behold, Thy mother and Thy brethren without seek for Thee. And He answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren? And He looked round about on them which sat about Him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.

It was neither denied nor questioned by these Scribes that men were really possessed by devils, or that Christ did really cast them out, but they came down from Jerusalem for the very purpose of finding fault with our Lord. They took, therefore, the only remaining method of disparaging these miracles by ascribing them to the evil influence of Satan. Our Lord points out the absurdity of supposing that Satan would cast out Satan, and He argues that no house could prosper by being divided against itself, and then 'because they said He hath an unclean spirit,' he adds the fearful denunciation of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.

Most carefully, therefore, should we abstain from countenancing any such conversation, or from handling or entertaining any opinion which may ascribe to any other than Divine agency the miracles of our Saviour. Better would it be to stand without like His mother and brethren, merely desiring to see Him: better to have been born in heathen lands, where they neither see nor hear of Christ, than to see and hear of His works, without humbly believing in His word. They stood without: let us press within.

They called from afar: let us fall down at His knees. Let us apply for His grace unto the saving of our souls. Then we shall receive the praise He promised: and be counted joint heirs with Him in eternal glory.

MARK, iv. 1-20.

AND He began again to teach by the sea side: and there was gathered unto Him a great multitude, so that He entered into a ship, and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land. And He taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in His doctrine, Hearken; behold, there went out a sower to sow: and it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up. And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth: but when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred. And He said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. And when He was alone, they that were about Him with the twelve asked of Him the parable. And He said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: that seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them. And He said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and

how then will ye know all parables? The sower soweth the word. And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts. And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; and have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended. And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful. And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirty-fold, some sixty, and some an hundred.

THE sower here spoken of is our Lord Himself. The seed is the word of His Gospel. Strange it is to think how day by day these glad tidings of salvation are proclaimed, and yet so many of the hearers remain unmoved, unconverted to a Christian life! The parable before us assigns the true reason for this sad failure of the heavenly seed. It is part only of the ground that is good. Few only of those who are thus called are in the end found fit to be chosen. Few only of those who thus hear the word, are fit to bring forth fruit unto perfection. Not that we must suppose any ground of itself to be good. God it is who both soweth and giveth the increase. He it is who maketh the ground capable of yielding true holiness, peace, and joy. Only there is some ground which answers to His care, and some which yields no return. And this parable shows us that the fault, when the seed fails, is not in the seed, but in the ground: not in the word preached, but in them that hear. Having then this parable here

explained to us by our Lord Himself, let us take heed that we apply it to the improvement of our hearts. Let us endeavour that His seed may never be sown in vain, His word never heard without amendment of life. For the more clearly it is given to us to know these mysteries of the gospel dispensation, the more deeply must we answer for it if we neglect them.

MARK, iv. 21-34.

AND He said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick? For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear. And He said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given. For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath. And He said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come. And He said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth: but when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and

shooteth out great branches ; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it. And with many such parables spake He the word unto them, as they were able to hear it. But without a parable spake He not unto them : and when they were alone, He expounded all things to His disciples.

OUR Saviour had used words nearly the same as these, though in a different sense, in His Sermon on the Mount. He here means that the word of God, which is intended for a lantern to our feet and a light to our paths, is delivered in parables, not that it may be concealed from those to whom it is delivered, but that the attention being employed with the greater diligence to observe the intended application, the same may be more clearly understood, and more deeply imprinted on the mind. The things which He now tells them privately ought to manifest themselves publicly by their effects in their life and doctrine ; and though it was necessary at present to conceal some things from the multitude, because their prejudices made them now incapable of receiving them, yet the time was coming when all these things must be published openly and plainly before all the world.

In the two parables which follow, we learn by what gentle means, and to what a wide extent, the Gospel of grace is to be spread abroad, both over the world in general, and also in the heart of each single Christian. Christ, after He had once taught the doctrine of true religion, and preached it, appears no more Himself visibly to assist and promote it, but suffers it to spread and increase, till at length it produces its full effect : but at the end of the world Christ will visibly appear to take to Himself and reward those who have received His doctrine and brought forth the fruits of it. Happy are we when we see Him as He is ; and find Him to be to us the tree of Life !

MARK, iv. 35-41.

AND the same day, when the even was come, He saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. And when they had sent away the multitude, they took Him even as He was in the ship. And there were also with Him other little ships. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake Him, and say unto Him, Master, carest Thou not that we perish? And He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And He said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith? And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?

THIS miracle is the more striking by reason of the great power of winds and waves, which we are accustomed to consider amongst the most violent things in nature, and which were here rebuked and made calm. We see how in this storm our Lord commanded that, by its sudden calming, it should prove Him to be the Christ, and His word the will of God. Whenever then we witness the like war of elements, let us be reminded of this miracle, and of Him who said effectually, 'Peace, be still.' Let these His words bring to our hearts, if not to things around us, a cheerful calm. Let them make us firm and faithful under all the terrors this world can present. Never let us suppose He cares not 'that we perish;' for He made all, He hath redeemed all. Let us then cast on Him all our care. Let us repose in Him all our trust.

Let us direct diligently our course by the compass of His word. And then, whatever storms arise, whatever waves surround us, though our condition be chequered with disaster, or even our spiritual course be perplexed with difficulty and distress, yet we shall at length enjoy within a great and lasting calm.

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MARK, v. 1-20.

AND they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes. And when He was come out of the ship, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones. But when he saw Jesus afar off, He ran and worshipped Him, and cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of the most high God? I adjure Thee by God, that Thou torment me not. For He said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit. And He asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many. And he besought Him much that He would not send them away out of the country. Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding. And all the devils besought Him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them. And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and

the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand ;) and were choked in the sea. And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done. And they come to Jesus, and see Him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid. And they that saw it told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine. And they began to pray Him to depart out of their coasts. And when He was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed Him that he might be with Him. Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.

FROM St. Matthew we learn that there were two men possessed with devils, though St. Mark and St. Luke only mention one. The dwelling of this poor man among the tombs, his violence towards himself, his crying day and night, all this represents to us the sad condition of any one who is subject to the possession of Satan. The conviction that we are encompassed with enemies so numerous, so malignant, should fill our thoughts with deep anxiety to defend ourselves from their renewed assaults. Christ and His faith can alone deliver us. To Him then, and to His word, let us have recourse, for He alone can cast them out. Let our danger and our sense of it make us put our trust more earnestly and devotedly in His power and our hope in His grace. And when happily by His goodness we are enabled to escape, when we are made sensible of what we owe to our Deliverer, let us learn

further the true method of expressing our thankful love. Let us, in spirit, in heart and soul, not in form only and outward profession, serve ever our Lord Jesus Christ, 'the Son of the most high God.' For if we so live, He will cast out from us all evil spirits, and will fill us instead with all good gifts, with grace and holiness, and peace and joy!

MARK, v. 21-43.

AND when Jesus was passed over again by ship unto the other side, much people gathered unto Him: and He was nigh unto the sea. And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw Him, he fell at His feet, and besought Him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray Thee, come and lay Thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live. And Jesus went with him; and much people followed Him, and thronged Him. And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years, and had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but grew rather worse, when she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched His garment. For she said, If I may touch but His clothes, I shall be whole. And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague. And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that virtue had gone out of Him, turned Him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes? And His disciples said unto Him, Thou seest the multitude thronging Thee, and sayest Thou, Who touched me? And He looked round about to see her that had done this thing. But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing

what was done in her, came and fell down before Him, and told Him all the truth. And He said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague. While He yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further? As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe. And He suffered no man to follow Him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James. And He cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly. And when He was come in, He saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed Him to scorn. But when He had put them all out, He taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with Him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying. And He took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, Arise. And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment. And He charged them straitly that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat.

WE here see in both these miracles how it is through Christ that faith maketh whole. Let us learn from this woman at once to think lowly of ourselves, and to think all things possible with Him. Let us approach Him with humility, in proportion to our unworthiness, with liveliness of faith, according to His power. And then, though we neither see that face, which 'turned about' to her in mercy, nor hear that gracious voice which said, 'Daughter,

be of good comfort,' yet may we enjoy a conviction abundantly sufficient, that our faith through Him hath made us whole.

Again we learn that though (whilst our Lord had been conversing with the woman whom He had healed) the daughter of Jairus whom He was proceeding to visit, in the mean time died, yet the ruler was not impatient under the delay. So great was his faith in Christ! For such let us not fail to apply in constant and earnest prayer. Then shall we find true that other gracious sentence of our Lord, 'The damsel is not dead, but sleepeth;' which proved that death, in the hands of Christ, is but as a sleep from which we shall be summoned by His word, 'Arise.' Thus may we find it true also in the sleep of sin. Thus may we, in our helpless frailty, be made by His grace to rise and walk also in His righteousness and peace all the days of our lives.

MARK, vi. 1-13.

AND He went out from thence, and came into His own country; and His disciples follow Him. And when the sabbath day was come, He began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing Him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto Him, that even such mighty works are wrought by His hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not His sisters here with us? and they were offended at Him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house. And He could there do no mighty

work, save that He laid His hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. And He marvelled because of their unbelief. And He went round about the villages, teaching. And He called unto Him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits; and commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse: but be shod with sandals; and not put on two coats. And He said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city. And they went out, and preached that men should repent. And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.

WE should observe here the strict impartiality of the evangelist, and his consciousness that nothing could derogate from the dignity of his Master, though the Jews would not acknowledge Him, and were so prejudiced against Him that He could not with propriety and wisdom perform any miracles among them in Nazareth (His own country), on account of their unworthiness and want of faith. That the work our Saviour had in hand might more readily be advanced, He began at this time to send forth by two and two His twelve apostles, giving them power over unclean spirits, and directions proper for the work they had to perform. They were to neglect all ordinary means of human provision. They were to take nothing for their journey, besides a staff to walk with, to be content with the first house they entered into, and throughout to proceed as persons who felt themselves under such

plain guidance and support from God, as no one else has ever had reason to expect. But they knew they would have much to go through, and would not always be received; for it is here recorded of our Lord Himself, that even the men of His own city would not receive Him. 'And He marvelled because of their unbelief.' He wondered at what He would have us wonder at; namely, our folly in refusing, if we do refuse, the preaching of the Gospel. God often calls us, and we will not come. Christ speaks, and we will not listen. The Holy Spirit moves us, and we resist. Heaven is before us, and we care not to enter in. Hell is at hand, and we fly not to escape. But let us not wonder only, but from wonder come to shame and sorrow, from sorrow to repentance, faith, and holiness of life.

MARK, vi. 14-29.

AND king Herod heard of Him; (for His name was spread abroad :) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in Him. Others said, That it is Elias. And others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets. But when Herod heard thereof, he said, It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead. For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her. For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife. Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not: for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did

many things, and heard him gladly. And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee; and when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee. And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom. And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist. And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist. And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her. And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison, and brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother. And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb.

ALTHOUGH Herod felt the greatest indignation against John, yet at the same time the character of that excellent man, his piety, his sanctity, his integrity, nay, even the courage which had so much offended and provoked him, commanded his respect and veneration, and excited his fears. Nor is this all; he not only feared John, but in some degree courted him. He frequently sent for him out of prison, conversed with him, and listened to him with attention and pleasure, and 'did many things' which John exhorted him to do. But the main point, the great object of John's reprehension, he would not give up. What a picture does this hold out to

us of human nature, and of that inconsistency and contradiction which sometimes takes place in the heart of man unsanctified by divine grace, and what an exalted idea at the same time does it give us of the dignity of a truly religious character like that of John, which compels even its bitterest enemies to reverence and fear it, at the very moment, perhaps, when they are meditating its destruction. Let us beware lest we forget God; let us not only do many things, but all things we know to be our duty. Let us try to do all in good earnest, never allowing ourselves to retain even one sin, however great the sacrifice may be to us to part with it. Hence we should continually try to direct our views to the end of all things in heaven, to the consummation of goodness, justice, and truth, in the judgment of Christ at the last day.

MARK, vi. 30-44.

AND the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told Him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught. And He said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. And they departed into a desert place by ship privately. And the people saw them departing, and many knew Him, and ran afoot thither out of all cities, and outwent them, and came together unto Him. And Jesus, when He came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and He began to teach them many things. And when the day was now far spent, His disciples came unto Him, and said, This is a desert place, and now the time is far

passed: send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread: for they have nothing to eat. He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they say unto Him, Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat? He saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? go and see. And when they knew, they say, Five, and two fishes. And He commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass. And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties. And when He had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, He looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to His disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided He among them all. And they did all eat, and were filled. And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes. And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men.

THE gathering together of the apostles to Jesus, to tell Him what they had done and taught, may remind us how needful it is for ourselves neither to do nor to say anything but what we would willingly tell to our blessed Lord. To Him we must in the end tell all things, give account of all before His judgment-seat, of all that we have done ourselves, of all that by our conversation or example we have taught others to do. And like the multitude which surrounded Christ, we should eagerly forestall the exhortations of our teachers; resorting rather of ourselves, than waiting to be invited, to God's house or His sacraments, to the presence of Christ in our common prayers, and to the communion of His blessed body and blood.' Let this be the first food we care for, the daily bread we chiefly pray for, the meat we labour for, the wealth, the prosperity, the kingdom we seek for above all. Then shall all other things

be added unto us, all things really needful for us, all things He judges to be needful, who alone knows what is for the best.

MARK, vi. 45-56.

AND straightway He constrained His disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while He sent away the people. And when He had sent them away, He departed into a mountain to pray. And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and He alone on the land. And He saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night He cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them. But when they saw Him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out: for they all saw Him, and were troubled. And immediately He talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid. And He went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered. For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened. And when they had passed over, they came into the land of Gennesaret, and drew to the shore. And when they were come out of the ship, straightway they knew Him, and ran through that whole region round about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard He was. And whithersoever He entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought Him that they might touch if it were but the border of His garment: and as many as touched Him were made whole.

THUS did our Lord give His disciples time to view Him distinctly and composedly, and He gave St. Peter an opportunity of addressing Him: but the slowness of their apprehension seemed wonderful. They could not believe it was Him, and 'were troubled.' They did not consider as they ought, that nothing could be difficult to power such as that which had performed the miracle of the loaves. Let us remember for our comfort that in the same way He can come nigh to us in all our trials, walk as on the waves of our affliction, and say to our troubled hearts, 'Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid.' Hence, let us for ourselves conclude, that all we do, and all we suffer, we do and suffer under the eye of God, under the eye of our Saviour Christ: who seeth us, and willeth not that we perish, but rather that we should be converted and live. Though He hide His face from us for a time, though we feel within ourselves no cheering consciousness of His assisting grace, He is not less sure, if only we have faith, to give us in the end salvation. And let us by our life and conversation make plain to all around us, that heaven is the harbour we are toiling to attain; and that He, through whose help we hope to reach it, is Jesus Christ our Lord.

MARK, vii. 1-13.

THEN came together unto Him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem. And when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen, hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except

they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables. Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, Why walk not Thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands? He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such-like things ye do. And He said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: but ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free. And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother; making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such-like things do ye.

ST. MATTHEW recorded this cavil of the Pharisees against the disciples of Jesus for eating with unclean hands: but he does not detail the customs of the Jews which gave the foundation for it, as St. Mark here does. St. Matthew was not only a Jew himself; but it appears, from the whole structure of his Gospel, that he wrote for the Jews. This explanation, therefore, if given by him, would have been unnatural, as not being required by the readers whom he addressed. But as St. Mark intended his narrative for general circulation, and had himself travelled to distant countries in the service of Christianity, the expla-

nation here given was most properly added. The censure of the Pharisees is turned by our Lord against themselves. The disciples might have violated the tradition of the elders. But the Scribes and Pharisees had transgressed God's law. Nothing helps us so much to overlook our own deficiency as this prying into the faults of our neighbours. Whilst we would pull out a mote in our brother's eye, we cannot so much as see the beam that is in our own. When we shall have become faultless in ourselves, then will it be time, (but it is a time that will never come,) for us to find fault. Meanwhile let us search into and reform our own lives, and let us pray for that lowliness of mind which will make us esteem others better than ourselves.

MARK, vii. 14-29.

AND when He had called all the people unto Him, He said unto them, Hearken unto me every one of you, and understand: there is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear. And when He was entered into the house from the people, His disciples asked Him concerning the parable. And He saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him; because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats? And He said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil

eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man. And from thence He arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know it: but He could not be hid. For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of Him, and came and fell at His feet: the woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought Him that He would cast forth the devil out of her daughter. But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs. And she answered and said unto Him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs. And He said unto her, For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter.

THE doctrine here laid down ought to be considered as most important to all of us: for our Lord, before He declared it, told all the people to understand, as well as to hearken. We must also understand, for we have no business on earth to be compared for importance with this. We have no peril so awful, as that against which we may here be warned. We ought then to try to understand this thoroughly, and apply it to our practice continually; and if we understand it not, to apply like the disciples with prayer to Christ, and ask Him to enlighten our thoughts, and to incline our hearts to obey, so that we may not entertain any 'evil thoughts' which 'defile the man.' Our Lord, in the miracle here related, stifled at first the emotions of His pity, and dissembled His merciful intentions, lest a miracle, wrought in favour of this Canaanitish woman, should be inconsistent with the distinction due to the chosen family. Notwithstanding this, how great was her faith! At a time when the great mystery was not disclosed, when the secret purpose of a general

redemption was not yet opened, yet was she not startled at the sound of this dreadful distinction!—the Israelites, children; the Gentiles, dogs! How great was her resignation to the will of God, and what humility and firmness does she display in her reply! Hence may we learn to persevere in prayer; but let us own with all humility, that we are unworthy so much as to gather up the crumbs that fall from the Master's table. Then will He give us, to our soul's health, the bread of life.

MARK, vii. 31–37.

AND again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, He came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis. And they bring unto Him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech Him to put His hand upon him. And He took him aside from the multitude, and put His fingers into his ears, and He spit, and touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain. And He charged them that they should tell no man: but the more He charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it; and were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: He maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.

THERE are two instances besides this, in which our Saviour, in performing a miracle, made use of a deliberate external application to the part which He intended to cure; and in all these the reason for employing it seems to have

been one and the same, even to convey to the individuals, on whom the miracles were performed, a clear assurance that Jesus was the person, at whose command, and by whose agency, the cure was wrought, and to enable them to state to others the grounds of this assurance fully and circumstantially. In order to show the man that he ought to acknowledge all benefits as proceeding from the Almighty, He looked up 'to heaven,' and He expressed by sighing his kind compassion for the misery that is brought into the world through sin. Notwithstanding the injunctions of our Saviour that he should 'tell no man,' it appears he thought his obligation to extol the goodness of the Lord so indispensable, that even a peremptory command to the contrary was not sufficient to excuse his omission of it. This example should render us past all excuse, if we, who lie under no such command, should be wanting in the expression of our warmest thankfulness for the great and various mercies which we daily and hourly receive at the hands of God.

MARK, viii. 1-13.

IN those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples unto Him, and saith unto them, I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat: and if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far. And His disciples answered Him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness? And He asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven. And

He commanded the people to sit down on the ground: and He took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to His disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people. And they had a few small fishes: and He blessed, and commanded to set them also before them. So they did eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets. And they that had eaten were about four thousand: and He sent them away. And straightway He entered into a ship with His disciples, and came into the parts of Dalmanutha. And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with Him, seeking of Him a sign from heaven, tempting Him. And He sighed deeply in His spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation. And He left them, and entering into the ship again departed to the other side.

WHILE we gladly wonder at this miracle of our Saviour in multiplying the loaves, let us well reflect upon our own condition. Whence is it that we obtain our continual provision for our wants? One and the same munificent hand does all. If the Israelites were fed with manna in the desert, and with corn in Canaan, both were done by the same power and bounty. If the disciples were fed by the loaves multiplied, and we are fed by grain multiplied in the earth, both are the act of one Omnipotence. What is this but a perpetual miracle, which Thou, O God, workest for our preservation? Without Thee there is no more power in the grain to multiply than in the loaf. It is Thou that givest it a body at Thy pleasure, and to every seed his own body. It is no reason that Thy goodness should be less the subject of our praises, because it is universal. Neither yet, O God and Saviour, is Thy hand closed with the gift of outward blessings. What abund-

ance of heavenly doctrine dost Thou set before us ; not according to our meanness, but according to Thy state are we fed ; we are full of Thy goodness,—may our hearts run over with thankfulness. We must not be like the perverse Pharisees who, notwithstanding the many miracles wrought amongst them, would believe nothing, except they saw a sign from heaven of their own choosing ; but may we put our whole trust in God, and feel Him to be the giver of all good things, of health to the body, of strength and salvation to the soul.

MARK, viii. 14–26.

NOW the disciples had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf. And He charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have no bread. And when Jesus knew it, He saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread ? perceive ye not yet, neither understand ? have ye your heart yet hardened ? Having eyes, see ye not ? and having ears, hear ye not ? and do ye not remember ? When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up ? They say unto Him, Twelve. And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up ? And they said, Seven. And He said unto them, How is it that ye do not understand ? And He cometh to Bethsaida ; and they bring a blind man unto Him, and besought Him to touch him. And He took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town ; and when He had spit on his eyes, and put His hands upon him, He

asked him if he saw ought. And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking. After that He put His hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly. And He sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town.

CHRIST wished now to improve the opportunity which the conduct of the Pharisees afforded, as a warning to His disciples. 'Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees.' Strange it seems, that by the use of the word 'leaven' they should think He alluded to their having forgotten to take bread. Carnal thoughts, it appears, were uppermost in their minds. And it is well if they are not often uppermost in ours at the very time, when we are listening to the words of Christ; though the many instances of providential care we have experienced, should prevent the too anxious thought for the morrow of this transitory world. Knowing the impenitence and unworthiness of the people of Bethsaida, our Lord took the blind man out of the town before He healed him. In this miracle, which is mentioned only by St. Mark, we may profitably observe how it was performed by degrees. On first looking up the man said, 'I see men as trees, walking,' implying that he saw them indistinctly, not discerning their form. Upon this Jesus put His hands upon his eyes, and 'he was restored.' Nor is it otherwise in the healing of our spiritual blindness, whereof this miracle may be taken for a sign and figure. Christ, of His goodness, first gives us sight. By the word of the Gospel He opens the eyes of our souls. But it is one thing to have a new spiritual sense, it is another thing to use it aright. Yet if we do not, we do but half see. Grant, Lord, that we may both receive our sight and have grace to use it according to

Thy will. Make us to love light rather than darkness, so that we may here behold Thy presence in righteousness, and hereafter the presence of Thy glory.

· MARK, viii. 27-38.

AND Jesus went out, and His disciples, into the towns of Cæsarea Philippi; and by the way He asked His disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am? And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets. And He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto Him, Thou art the Christ. And He charged them that they should tell no man of Him. And He began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. And He spake that saying openly. And Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him. But when He had turned about and looked on His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men. And when He had called the people unto Him with His disciples also, He said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful

generation ; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.

IN order to suppress in His disciples the notions they had of His being a triumphant king on earth, our Lord explained to them by degrees the nature of His kingdom. He warned them that the Son of man,—meaning, as they knew, Himself,—must suffer many things, and be rejected and killed. This was necessary for the great object of this spiritual reign, which must needs be founded on the atonement of His blood. And greatly ought we to rejoice in these tidings, since it is by His death, and by His death alone, that we have hope of eternal life. But to the disciples this account seemed strange and hard. And St. Peter ventured to rebuke or remonstrate with our Lord on the subject. But our Saviour's answer, 'Get thee behind me, Satan,' at once implied that He considered the words of Peter were a snare and suggestion of Satan, tempting Him to avoid the sufferings and death by which it was God's will that we should be healed. Our Lord would not conceal from us the cost of saving the soul alive. He warns us also that we must deny ourselves, and take up our cross, and follow Him. Let us then be content to be as He was here, content to be afflicted, weary, poor, and sorrowful ; content to suffer sickness, pain, and death, that hereafter we may share with Him an inheritance in heaven for ever.

MARK, ix. 1-13.

AND He said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God

come with power. And after six days Jesus taketh with Him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and He was transfigured before them. And His raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them. And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus. And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid. And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear Him. And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves. And as they came down from the mountain, He charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead. And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean. And they asked Him, saying, Why say the scribes that Elias must first come? And He answered and told them, Elias verily cometh first, and restoreth all things; and how it is written of the Son of man, that He must suffer many things, and be set at nought. But I say unto you, That Elias is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him.

It was a high privilege for Peter, James, and John, that they witnessed this transfiguration of their Lord, this foretaste, or first beginning, as we may conceive it to have been, of what He had just before been speaking of, 'the kingdom of God come with power.' It was a high privilege for them to witness it, nor is it a small matter for us to hear their account of it, as set down in these words of

the Gospel, for this was among the things which many prophets and kings desired to see, and saw not. When we read how suddenly Jesus was transfigured, how soon, together with Moses and Elias, He was seen in this altered and heavenly state, we should be made sensible how vain are all this world's objects, how false their lustre, how transitory their continuance, and how certainly, behind the veil they make, there is existing ever close to us a kingdom of God, a world of excellence unutterable. To it we might be summoned in a moment by our Lord. The more we meditate on that spiritual universe, the better shall we be prepared to enter into its enjoyment. And the better we are prepared, the sooner and more surely will He take us to dwell therein for ever. At the same time, we should not murmur at having to wait for a while, or at suffering many things in this mortal life; for what could be of greater comfort to a Christian than to be made like unto Christ in suffering? And what can be more encouraging to our zeal, than the assurance that 'now we are the sons of God;' and that though 'it doth not yet appear what we shall be, we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is!' (1 John, iii. 2.)

MARK, ix. 14-29.

AND when He came to His disciples, He saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them. And straightway all the people, when they beheld Him, were greatly amazed, and running to Him saluted Him. And He asked the scribes, What question ye with them? And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto Thee my son, which

hath a dumb spirit ; and wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him : and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away : and I spake to Thy disciples that they should cast him out ; and they could not. He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you ? how long shall I suffer you ? bring him unto me. And they brought him unto Him : and when he saw Him, straightway the spirit tare him ; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming. And He asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him ? And he said, Of a child. And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him : but if Thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us. Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe ; help Thou mine unbelief. When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him. And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him : and he was as one dead ; insomuch that many said, He is dead. But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up ; and he arose. And when He was come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, Why could not we cast him out ? And He said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.

ON our Lord's coming down from being transfigured, 'the people were greatly amazed.' Probably some of the glory remained on His countenance after His transfiguration, as was the case with Moses on descending from Mount Sinai. The disciples had occasion to experience, during the absence of their Lord and Master, their entire dependence on His help ; for they found they could

not succeed in casting out a dumb spirit. Whilst the father of the poor afflicted child seems to have been wanting in faith, the disciples had been neglectful of prayer. This accounted for their failure, and this probably will account for ours, whereinsoever we are conscious that we fall short of what, by God's grace, we might attain. The father indeed, desponding at their want of success, doubts even the ability of our Lord Himself, for Jesus said unto him, 'If thou canst believe.' Such is the infirmity, the perversity of man! We question in our healing the power of Christ, when we ought to question only our own faith. We think as though God could not redeem us from sin, could not make us keep our good purposes, could not confirm us in holiness of life. We ought to think that He both can do so, and will, if only we believe; for 'all things are possible to him that believeth.' Let us say then, 'Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.' Accept what poor service we perform, and make it better. Regard with mercy what faint love we feel, and make it more devout, more pure, more worthy of Thyself, more like to Thine.

MARK, ix. 30-50.

AND they departed thence, and passed through Galilee; and He would not that any man should know it. For He taught His disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill Him; and after that He is killed, He shall rise the third day. But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask Him. And He came to Capernaum: and being in the house He asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? But they

held their peace : for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest. And He sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all. And He took a child, and set him in the midst of them : and when He had taken him in His arms, He said unto them, Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me : and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but Him that sent me. And John answered Him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy name, and he followeth not us : and we forbad him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not : for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part. For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward. And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea. And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off : it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched : where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off : it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched : where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out : it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire : where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. Salt is good : but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it ? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.

OUR Lord, in passing through Galilee, avoided all public notice. And where He might have received men's homage for His mighty works, He preferred occupying Himself in preparing the disciples to expect His approaching sufferings. So would it be well for us also when we are in prosperity, to call to mind that we have a death to die, and to turn from the enjoyment of this world's happiness, to contemplate the glories of the next. But whilst the disciples should have been applying this discourse of their Lord to their spiritual edification, they had been, it seems, disputing by the way 'who should be the greatest.' Thus they transgressed at once, in two most plain points of Christian duty, humility and love. Let us learn from the words of Christ that this conduct is not only the height of folly, but, at the same time, the height of sin. Like children we are to receive and treat each other with gentleness and forbearance; taking care never to discourage any one, whom we may find promoting the doctrine of the Gospel, for in His cause, 'whosoever is not against us is on our part.' Let us then endeavour 'to live peaceably with all men,' and may the Lord season us with the salt of heavenly grace, that we may escape the salt of hell-fire!

MARK, x. 1-16.

AND He arose from thence, and cometh into the coasts of Judæa by the farther side of Jordan: and the people resort unto Him again; and, as He was wont, He taught them again. And the Pharisees came to Him, and asked Him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting Him. And He answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you? And they said, Moses

suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away. And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. And in the house His disciples asked Him again of the same matter. And He saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery. And they brought young children to Him, that He should touch them: and His disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them.

WHILST our Lord was thus employed in doing good, He was tempted by the Pharisees with a captious question on the subject of divorce. We should note the wisdom of His reply, which left them neither excuse in their conduct, nor matter of accusation against His own words. He shows them from the writings of their lawgiver, Moses, the principle on which marriage is inviolable. He refers them to its first institution, and He teaches them that it is God who joineth together them that are married; and points out how wrong it must therefore be for men to put them asunder: and this last principle we may apply to all things which God has in His word united. And we should

thus reflect how sinful it is for man to put asunder faith from works, grace from holiness of life, the happiness of heaven from obedience on earth. To the Pharisees, who tempted Him, our Lord answered without displeasure, as they plotted only against Himself. With the disciples who rebuked those who brought children to Him, 'He was much displeased;' for, as He said unto them, 'of such is the kingdom of God,' which here means the Church of Christ, into which they who are admitted are entitled, if they observe His precepts, to eternal life in the world to come: for to enter into the kingdom of God, is to be a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

MARK, x. 17-31.

AND when He was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to Him, and asked Him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother. And he answered and said unto Him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions. And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto His disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! And the disciples were astonished at His words.

But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God ! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved ? And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God : for with God all things are possible. Then Peter began to say unto Him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed Thee. And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions ; and in the world to come eternal life. But many that are first shall be last ; and the last first.

WE learn from St. Matthew that the young man mentioned here, asked of our Lord the way to inherit eternal life. It appears that he had been brought up from infancy in what he reckoned to be obedience to the commands of God. Our Lord approved these gracious beginnings in him, with expressions of outward kindness and friendship for his care of his parents, and other good deeds. But often, when we most think that we have obeyed, we are far from the obedience which our Lord intends for us. It was on hearing how hardly they, who trust in riches, enter into the kingdom of heaven, that St. Peter was tempted to reflect in somewhat of a vain-glorious spirit,—‘Lo, we have left all, and have followed Thee.’ Our Lord, in reply, first asserts that they who do in earnest so leave all for His sake and the Gospel's, shall receive ‘an hundredfold now in this time ;’ but then He remarks, to this gracious retribution, that ‘many that

are first shall be last ; and the last first.' This clause seems to have been designed as a reproof and a warning to St. Peter : a reproof of his boastful words, a warning of his future fall. At all events, we may do well to apply it in this sense to ourselves. We are bound to acknowledge how much this life's blessings, when enjoyed with thankfulness, outweigh its utmost evils when borne with resignation. And thus, though affliction in any form or amount be dispensed to us by the will of God, we have the great consolation that there is laid up for us, according to the same Divine will, 'in the world to come eternal life.'

MARK, x. 32-45.

AND they were in the way going up to Jerusalem ; and Jesus went before them : and they were amazed ; and as they followed, they were afraid. And He took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto Him, saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem ; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes ; and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles : and they shall mock Him, and shall scourge Him, and shall spit upon Him, and shall kill Him : and the third day He shall rise again. And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto Him, saying, Master, we would that Thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire. And He said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you ? They said unto Him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on Thy right hand, and the other on Thy left hand, in Thy glory. But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask : can ye drink of the cup that I

drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? And they said unto Him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized: but to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared. And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John. But Jesus called them to Him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you shall be your minister: and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.

THE disciples were amazed at our Lord's voluntarily exposing Himself to danger, which He formerly seemed to decline; for the chief priests had resolved to put Him to death, and had issued orders to have Him apprehended. Most unreasonable was the request urged by John and James; and it showed that these two disciples were not so disciplined by their continual conversation with Christ, hearing His heavenly doctrine, seeing His Divine behaviour, but that their minds were still roving after temporal honours. Pride is the inmost coat, which we put off last and put on first. Who can wonder to see some sparks of weak and worldly desires in the most holy of men, when the blessed apostles were not free from some ambitious thoughts while they sat at the feet, yea, in the bosom, of their Saviour? How wonderful is the mildness of the Son of God! He does not chide the two disciples, either for their ambition in suing, or for their presump-

tion in undertaking; but, leaving the worst, He notices the best part of their answer, and, omitting their errors, He encourages their good intentions. Whosoever then would be great, let him be as the servant of all. Let him set before him the pattern of the Son of man, who 'came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.'

MARK, x. 46-52.

AND they came to Jericho: and as He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimæus, the son of Timæus, sat by the highway side begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, Thou son of David, have mercy on me. And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Thou son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; He calleth thee. And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus. And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto Him, Lord, that I might receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.

THIS Bartimæus was one of the two blind men mentioned by St. Matthew as having been healed at this time by our Lord. His faith was shown both in his persevering to pray, and his acknowledging Jesus to be the Son

of David. Thus ought we to continue steadfast and firm in our profession of the Christian faith. If thus we persevere in calling faithfully upon Christ, He too will in His good time call us. He will draw us nearer and nearer to Himself. In each hindrance we experience, in each fall we meet with, a voice of comfort will be heard within our hearts saying, 'Rise; He calleth thee.' He calleth us to suffer for awhile, to be estranged a short space from the light of His countenance, only that after the more perfect trial of our faith, and our more patient continuance in well-doing, He may give us the more exalted place in the glory that shall be revealed. May He help us, when we fall, to rise; when sad, to be of good comfort! The more we are hindered, the more ought we to persevere; and the more we are discouraged, the more *ought* we to pray.

MARK, xi. 1-14.

AND when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, He sendeth forth two of His disciples, and saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring him. And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him hither. And they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door without in a place where two ways met; and they loose him. And certain of them that stood there said unto them, What do ye, loosing the colt? And they said unto them even as Jesus had commanded: and they let them go. And they brought the colt to Jesus, and

cast their garments on him ; and He sat upon him. And many spread their garments in the way : and others cut down branches off the trees, and strawed them in the way. And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna ; Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord : Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord : Hosanna in the highest. And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple : and when He had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, He went out unto Bethany with the twelve. And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, He was hungry : and seeing a fig-tree afar off having leaves, He came, if haply He might find any thing thereon : and when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves ; for the time of figs was not yet. And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And His disciples heard it.

To fulfil the words of the prophet, our Lord was content, for the example of humility and love, to ride upon a borrowed colt ; as He ate also the passover in a borrowed room, and was buried in another man's sepulchre. In this account of our Lord's entry into Jerusalem, we may remark also His singular exercise of Divine knowledge, in directing His two disciples to the exact place where they would find the colt tied. Herein we see one chief attribute of God our Saviour ; He understandeth our thoughts 'long before ;' He heareth, when we think He heareth not ; He seeth, when we seem to be out of sight. Let us pray the more earnestly that He will forgive us our secret sins, even those which are unknown to us ; and let us ever pray and strive that He may hear from our lips, and see in our hearts, only that which is good. The moral of the parable of the fig-tree cannot easily be mistaken. The tree which seemed to be in a flourishing condition was an

exact figure of the Jews. They had a Divine revelation to guide them, they had the public worship of God established amongst them; but all was outside show and hypocrisy, without any solid and substantial goodness: they had nothing besides leaves, and therefore that which they had was to be taken from them. As the tree sickened, withered, and died away, so was their city to be destroyed, their country made desolate, and themselves either cut off in a miserable manner, or driven and dispersed over the face of the earth.

MARK, xi. 15-33.

AND they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves; and would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple. And He taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves. And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy Him: for they feared Him, because all the people was astonished at His doctrine. And when even was come, He went out of the city. And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig-tree dried up from the roots. And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto Him, Master, behold, the fig-tree which Thou cursedst is withered away. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things

which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses. And they come again to Jerusalem: and as He was walking in the temple, there come to Him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders, and say unto Him, By what authority doest Thou these things? and who gave Thee this authority to do these things? And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask of you one question, and answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? answer me. And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; He will say, Why then did ye not believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; they feared the people: for all men counted John, that he was a prophet indeed. And they answered and said unto Jesus, We cannot tell. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.

THE sentence of barrenness pronounced by our Lord took effect the next day; for they found the fig-tree 'dried up from the roots.' In the mean time He visited the city and people of the Jews, and found them in like manner barren of good works, and devoted to destruction. There He taught this important lesson, that the house of God is 'the house of prayer,' casting out from the temple all those who frequented its sacred courts for any other purposes but those of devotion. In the Lord's house we must indeed exclude every other topic from our thoughts

and pray earnestly and with faith, not doubting in our hearts that God is able and willing to dry up the root of sinfulness within us, or to remove from us that burden of iniquities, which, as a mountain, is too heavy for us to bear; and whilst we pray for forgiveness, we must likewise be full of tenderness, compassion, and forgiveness towards others. The Jewish rulers were labouring under a notion that the Messiah was to be a temporal prince, whose authority would supersede their own, and on that account they now asked our Lord, who gave Him His authority?—as though they were not aware that it came from God. To this He gave no reply, except by asking them a question in return, as to whether the baptism of John came from heaven or of men. But they were afraid of the people, and ‘would not tell.’ Let us never fear what people may think of us, but let us search for truth, with single purpose to obey His will. Make us resolve to count all things but loss, even all we most love on earth, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord.

MARK, xii. 1–17.

AND He began to speak unto them by parables. A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it, and digged a place for the winefat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country. And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard. And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty. And again he sent unto them another servant: and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled. And again he sent another; and him they

killed, and many others; beating some, and killing some. Having yet therefore one son, his wellbeloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son. But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be our's. And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard. What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others. And have ye not read this scripture; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner: this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? And they sought to lay hold on Him, but feared the people: for they knew that He had spoken the parable against them: and they left Him, and went their way. And they send unto Him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, to catch Him in His words. And when they were come, they say unto Him, Master, we know that Thou art true, and carest for no man: for Thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth: Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not? Shall we give, or shall we not give? But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye me? bring me a penny, that I may see it. And they brought it. And He saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto Him, Cæsar's. And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marvelled at Him.

It was the object of our Lord in many of the parables which have been recorded in the Gospels, to foreshow the rejection of the Jews, and the calling of the Gentiles. We may conclude, therefore, that these are matters well suited for our frequent consideration. In the conduct of the husbandmen here related, we have faithfully repre-

sented both the behaviour of the Jews under the Law, and that to which Christians are tempted under the Gospel. As those wicked men slew the servants and the son, so the Jews also put to death their Messiah ; and so do we transgress whenever we take the benefit of Gospel mercy, without fulfilling the precepts of Gospel righteousness. Never may we hear without conviction, nor be convinced without grace to repent. And if we ask of Him in prayer, without longing for His grace, what other reply can we expect from Him than that which He gave to the Pharisees and Herodians, ‘Why tempt ye me?’ It is not only what our lips may utter, or what our eyes may read, nor even what our thoughts are dwelling upon, but rather what our hearts are purposing to do ; and while we ask in prayer, this is what He knoweth and chiefly noteth ; and by this it is that He judgeth whether we shall receive a blessing or rebuke.

MARK, xii. 18-27.

THEN come unto Him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection ; and they asked Him, saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man’s brother die, and leave his wife behind him, and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. Now there were seven brethren : and the first took a wife, and dying left no seed. And the second took her, and died, neither left he any seed : and the third likewise. And the seven had her, and left no seed : last of all the woman died also. In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them ? for the seven had her to wife. And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not

the scriptures, neither the power of God? For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven. And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err.

It appears from this passage that the Jews must have had, before our Saviour's time, some knowledge or notion of a resurrection. And it may help to confirm our dependence on that glorious consummation of our hopes, to reflect that it is a thing to which God's chosen people have looked forward in all ages of the world. If any of us should distrust God's power, they ought to make themselves better acquainted with His word, and enliven their convictions by considering, that with Him 'all things are possible.' That state cannot be judged of from our present faculties, though we know that, if we rightly use them, they will, in a measure, help us to attain it. Scripture does not tell us what heaven actually is, but we know it is not a place where sin can enter. There will be no tears, no pain, no sorrow there. But what it really is we must wait to know. Let us then not so much enquire what heaven is, as search how we may best secure its enjoyment. Let us here aim to love God above everything, and to love all men as ourselves, that so we may hereafter more readily love Him only, or love with Him, alike truly and affectionately, all whom we shall then behold.

MARK, xii. 28-44.

AND one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, Which is the first commandment of all? And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. And the scribe said unto Him, Well, Master, Thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but He: and to love Him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, He said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask Him any question. And Jesus answered and said, while He taught in the temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the son of David? For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The LORD said to my Lord, Sit Thou on my right hand, till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool. David therefore himself calleth Him Lord; and whence is He then his son? And the common people heard Him gladly. And He said unto them in His doctrine, Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplaces, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts: which devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation. And Jesus

sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And He called unto Him His disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: for all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.

THE answer of our Lord to the scribe sets before us, as the two chief rules of our conduct, the love of God and the love of man. And these we are to understand, not as set above all other commandments, but rather as including them. We are to fix uppermost in our thoughts a due sense of Almighty God, as the Father creating us, as the Son redeeming us, as the Holy Ghost making us holy. Thus regarding Him, we are to love Him 'with all our hearts, with all our souls, with all our minds, and with all our strength,' and we must love our neighbour as we love ourselves. And then we shall need no further instruction as to which commandment is first or last, when we feel deeply bound to fulfil them all. The question of our Lord, how Christ could be the Son of David, appears to have greatly perplexed the Scribes. But as in the last question the learning of the Scribes was put to shame, so in the words following their hypocrisy is condemned. Jesus warns the people to beware of them, on the ground of their pretending to be devout, whilst their conduct was full of iniquity. That the quality of our actions, as viewed by God, depends mainly on the inward disposition in ourselves, we have further assurance of, in the praise our Lord here bestowed on the contribution of a widow to the treasury. And graciously will He respect that saying, and pronounce that praise on the very poorest of us, in

proportion as we approach to the pattern of this widow, and are willing, in any works of almsgiving or love, to cast in even all that we have.

MARK, xiii. 1-13.

AND as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples saith unto Him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here ! And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings ? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. And as He sat upon the mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked Him privately, Tell us, when shall these things be ? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled ? And Jesus answering them began to say, Take heed lest any man deceive you : for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ ; and shall deceive many. And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled : for such things must needs be ; but the end shall not be yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom : and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles : these are the beginnings of sorrows. But take heed to yourselves : for they shall deliver you up to councils ; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten : and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them. And the gospel must first be published among all nations. But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate : but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye : for it is not ye that speak, but the

Holy Ghost. Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son ; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake ; but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

AT the sight of the temple the disciples expressed their astonishment and admiration at the great stones and buildings. They thought, perhaps, that it would be as a palace for their Master, when He should establish the kingdom they were looking for on earth. Jesus, in His answer, leads them to look for His reign elsewhere, and not to dwell upon the transitory nature of this world's grandeur. Let us learn from this, that of all adorning of churches, devotion in our worship is the best ! Let us reflect how perishable are all outward helps, not of worship only, but of all earthly state and greatness. And let us so much the more study to prepare ourselves for the enjoyment of a building of God, 'a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.' To the question put by the disciples, 'When shall these things be?' our Lord replies, not by revealing the time, but by teaching how to prepare for its arrival. How long this world may last, or how soon it may come to an end, matters little to us, compared with how we may best abide that end whensoever it arrives, and how we shall best be fitted to stand before the judgment of Christ. This then let us enquire of Him sincerely, and we may be sure He will vouchsafe us a gracious answer.

MARK, xiii. 14-37.

BUT when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judæa flee to the mountains: and let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take any thing out of his house: and let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment. But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter. For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be. And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom He hath chosen, He hath shortened the days. And then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ; or, Lo, He is there; believe him not: for false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect. But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things. But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then shall He send His angels, and shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven. Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near: so ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things

come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away. But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.

AS Jerusalem was a city whose calamities were in some sort a figure of those which should afterwards befall the Christian Church: so the afflictions with which the Jews were visited, represent those which will be dispensed to Christians until the end of time. And in our similar circumstances of difficulty and trial, we may profitably apply to our own conduct the directions here given to the disciples, for as they were intended to prepare them for their approaching troubles, so we ought to consider them as applicable to our own preparation for the coming of Christ to judgment. We are warned of a period when 'the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light.' The world on which now our senses rest with confidence, will in an instant cease to be. 'But of that day and that hour knoweth no man:' 'watch ye therefore.' Watch for this very reason that 'ye know not when the master of the house cometh.' Watch, 'lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.' Watch daily, as in the morning light the stars are seen to disappear. Watch

daily, as the sun goes down. For how do you know that you will see his light return? And how would you venture to be sinfully asleep that night when the sun shall set, never to rise again?

MARK, xiv. 1-11.

AFTER two days was the feast of the passover, and of unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take Him by craft, and put Him to death. But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar of the people. And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on His head. And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her. And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me. For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always. She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her. And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray Him unto them. And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray Him.

THIS most solemn of all their festivals, was the last occasion on which we might have expected that the Jewish rulers would have compassed the death of Christ. And they were indeed reluctant to have Him taken at that time. But why? Not by reason of the sinfulness of what they designed; not for fear of aggravating their sin before God; but for fear of men: 'lest there be an uproar of the people.' We ought then to take care that our deference for things sacred, and for sacred days, may be traced to a reverence for Almighty God, rather than to a respect for man's opinion. Whilst the enemies of our Lord were seeking 'how they might take Him by craft,' it occurred to one of His devout followers to do an act in preparation for His approaching end. Such was the kind construction put by Jesus. 'She hath done what she could.' This is the praise here given to her by Him. We must also do what we can. Whatever be our information, opportunities, or abilities, we are bound to make the most of them in the service of Christ. Blessed be His Name, that He never requires of us more than we might always do! The little which the very best of us can do, He will, if we do it in earnest, count for more than we humbly think for; and He will reward it with the praise which it does in no way deserve.

MARK, xiv. 12-25.

AND the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover, His disciples said unto Him, Where wilt Thou that we go and prepare that Thou mayest eat the passover? And He sendeth forth two of His disciples, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow

him. And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the good-man of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? And he will shew you a large upper room furnished and prepared : there make ready for us. And His disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as He had said unto them : and they made ready the passover. And in the evening He cometh with the twelve. And as they sat and did eat, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, One of you which eateth with me shall betray me. And they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto Him one by one, Is it I? and another said, Is it I? And He answered and said unto them, It is one of the twelve, that dippeth with me in the dish. The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of Him : but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed ! good were it for that man if he had never been born. And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat : this is my body. And He took the cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them : and they all drank of it. And He said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many. Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God.

WE have many instances to prove that our blessed Lord knew all things, future as well as present, distant as well as near. And in pointing out where He would eat the Passover with His disciples, He gives, in a very striking manner, this evidence of His Divine foreknowledge. So it is in each least thing we do ; God knoweth it beforehand. And hereafter we shall find, if we do it as He hath told us, that we shall, as He hath said unto us, in no wise lose our reward. Towards the close of their eating the Passover, we here find the institution of the

Blessed Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ. The Passover was kept in memory of the Israelites being spared when the Lord smote all the firstborn of the Egyptians. The lamb appointed to be slain was a figure or representation of Christ—of Christ to be slain for the sins of men. Here our Lord may be considered to say, I ordain a new figure; I appoint that you eat bread as my body, and that in doing so you shall be partakers of the benefit of my death. And in like manner ‘He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.’ Should not then all Christians (who wish to obtain that ‘remission of sins’) consider it their duty to obey this last command of their blessed Saviour, and receive regularly the Holy Sacrament? But greatly is it to be deplored that out of congregations so large, as frequent our churches, so few are found to attend this Divine ordinance.

MARK, xiv. 26–42.

AND when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives. And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee. But Peter said unto Him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I. And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with Thee, I will not deny Thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all. And they came to a place which was

named Gethsemane: and He saith to His disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray. And He taketh with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy; and saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch. And He went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him. And He said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what Thou wilt. And He cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter; Simon, sleepest thou? couldest not thou watch one hour? Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak. And again He went away, and prayed, and spake the same words. And when He returned, He found them asleep again, (for their eyes were heavy,) neither wist they what to answer Him. And He cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand.

AFTER the supper our Lord warned His disciples, that one of them should betray Him, when they asked with concern, 'Lord, is it I?' When afterwards informed of a less heinous offence, they were all ready to join with Peter in saying, 'If I should die with Thee I will not deny Thee.' In the result we plainly see how much better it is to have an humble distrust of our resolution against the hour of trial, than a presumptuous security in our strength. Sad was the proof of what our weakness may be, and fearful the evidence of what agony sin may make us endure! This is shown forth by the sufferings of the blessed Jesus in 'the place which was named Gethsemane.' It was the taste of our sins which made that cup so bitter, that hour

so full of horror, and that willing Saviour so intent to pray, that they might, if it were possible, pass from Him. And thankful ought we to be, that He bare all this for us, and for our salvation. Only the brief duration of this transitory life does our Saviour demand our service. How easy is His yoke through grace to bear! and how light His burden through watchfulness to support! How deep then must be our shame and confusion of face, if we deserve, as we often do, for our spiritual sloth, to hear from His lips the affectionate reproof, 'What, could ye not watch with me one hour?'

MARK, xiv. 43-54.

AND immediately, while He yet spake, cometh Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. And he that betrayed Him had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is He; take Him, and lead Him away safely. And as soon as he was come, he goeth straightway to Him, and saith, Master, master; and kissed Him. And they laid their hands on Him, and took Him. And one of them that stood by drew a sword, and smote a servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. And Jesus answered and said unto them, Are ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and with staves to take me? I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not: but the scriptures must be fulfilled. And they all forsook Him, and fled. And there followed Him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him: and he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked. And they led Jesus

away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes. And Peter followed Him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire.

WHICH shall we consider the worst of our Lord's enemies, the multitude who came against Him 'with swords and staves,' or Judas who had given them a token saying, 'Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is He?' Never may we follow the multitude to do evil! Never may we with our lips draw near to Christ, while our hearts are all the while far from Him! Never may we say, Master, master, and do not the things He hath commanded! 'And they laid their hands on Him, and took Him.' In the emergency 'one of them that stood by' 'thought to defend Him, and drew a sword, smote a servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear.' Jesus, instead of resisting them by force, meekly reasoned with them, that such force as they applied was needless. Here we see how we may best meet force with meekness; how we may turn away wrath with a soft answer! 'And they all forsook Him and fled.' All; even they all who had so lately agreed that they would die with Him rather than deny Him. All; even he also who in the vehemence of his zeal had drawn a sword in his Master's defence. May the Lord, in His mercy, incline our hearts to follow Him unto the end; to fear no shame but His reproof; no ill-will, but His displeasure. May He make us meek to answer when assailed; slow to strike when smitten; averse to flatter, faithful to defend, and only afraid to sin!

MARK, xiv. 55-72.

AND the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put Him to death; and found none. For many bare false witness against Him, but their witness agreed not together. And there arose certain, and bare false witness against Him, saying, We heard Him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands. But neither so did their witness agree together. And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest Thou nothing? what is it which these witness against Thee? But He held His peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked Him, and said unto Him, Art Thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned Him to be guilty of death. And some began to spit on Him, and to cover His face, and to buffet Him, and to say unto Him, Prophecy: and the servants did strike Him with the palms of their hands. And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest: and when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth. But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew. And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them. And he denied it again. And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them: for thou

art a Galilæan, and thy speech agreeth thereto. But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak. And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept.

WE have here an account of the trial and condemnation of Jesus by the high priest and assembled council, wherein we may observe how eminently sinful it must be to bear false witness. Let us therefore, with redoubled watchfulness, refrain our lips from evil, and our tongue that it speak no guile. And whilst we consider our Lord as the spotless sacrifice offered once for sin, let us at the same time regard Him as the God who will hereafter bring sinners to judgment. For He died for our salvation, for the saving us from sin and death. The behaviour of St. Peter, here so faithfully recorded, by his constant companion St. Mark, may be considered as a warning to all Christians of the perils and progress of falsehood. For who is there that dare reckon himself to be safe, when so grievous a fall is set down, against one to whom our Lord had previously declared, 'Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona?' Take notice, how this untruth of St. Peter's was prompted by fear, persisted in with hardihood, and at length repented of with tears. Let us, for our warning, ever imagine, when we are tempted to say the thing that is not, that with Peter we hear the cock crow twice; let us with Peter call to mind the words of Christ; and let us with Peter go out and weep.

MARK, xv. 1-20.

AND straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried Him away, and delivered him to Pilate. And Pilate asked Him, Art Thou the King of the Jews? And He answering said unto him, Thou sayest it. And the chief priests accused Him of many things: but He answered nothing. And Pilate asked Him again, saying, Answerest Thou nothing? behold how many things they witness against Thee. But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled. Now at that feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired. And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection. And the multitude crying aloud began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them. But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews? For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy. But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them. And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do unto Him whom ye call the King of the Jews? And they cried out again, Crucify Him. Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath He done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify Him. And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged Him, to be crucified. And the soldiers led Him away into the hall called Prætorium; and they call together the whole band. And they clothed Him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about His head, and began to salute Him, Hail, King of the

Jews! And they smote Him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon Him, and bowing their knees worshipped Him. And when they had mocked Him, they took off the purple from Him, and put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him.

IN this sad history, while we admire the meek behaviour of the accused, we must view with abhorrence the injustice of the judge, and the frantic violence of the accusers. Pilate consented (rather than offend the people) to let loose the guilty; and for the same reason, he yielded up the innocent to death. 'But the chief priests accused Him of many things.' How doubly sinful was such violence in those ministers of religion, whose office was one of peace and mercy! How doubly hateful was their sin, that they should not only themselves accuse Christ, but move also the people to desire of Pilate, 'that he should rather release Barabbas unto them!' Never let us entertain that 'friendship of the world,' which is 'enmity with God,' lest we become guilty also of joining in that cry of hatred, which condemned our Saviour to the cross. The humiliation of our Lord here related, is well suited to make us think of the offensiveness of our sins, for which He so deeply suffered. Let us in all these things see our Saviour's love. Let us feel that it was love towards ourselves, and let it be the settled purpose of our minds, that we bear, not sorrow only and sickness, but insults even, with meekness, after the example of our Lord, for His sake, and through the grace He gives.

MARK, xv. 21-32.

AND they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear His cross. And they bring Him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull. And they gave Him to drink wine mingled with myrrh : but He received it not. And when they had crucified Him, they parted His garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take. And it was the third hour, and they crucified Him. And the superscription of His accusation was written over, **THE KING OF THE JEWS.** And with Him they crucify two thieves ; the one on His right hand, and the other on His left. And the Scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And He was numbered with the transgressors. And they that passed by railed on Him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save Thyself, and come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others ; Himself He cannot save. Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with Him reviled Him.

WE have now read a full and detailed account of our Lord's sufferings, and how the Scriptures were fulfilled in every particular, even in that when 'He was numbered with the transgressors.' He died not for them only, but with them. Let none then count the worst unworthy of their fellowship, either in life or death ; for we must not forget that we are all sinners, and that we are all in like need of God's mercy through Christ. Let us hope that

amongst thieves even and murderers, amongst the covetous, the dishonest, and the uncharitable, there may be some who, through repentance and faith, even yet shall die with Christ, and shall be the same day with Him in Paradise. Whilst the Saviour of mankind was on the cross, there were found among those for whose sins He suffered, men with such hard hearts that they 'railed on Him, wagging their heads,' and taunting Him with the very promises which He had uttered for their good. One chief point of the mockery here levelled against our Lord, was founded on His prophetic declaration that He would in three days rebuild the temple first destroyed. This He spake of the temple of His body ; how He should be put to death, and how within three days He would raise Himself from the dead. But they wilfully overlooked the clear predictions of the Messiah's humiliation and sufferings. May we ever be on our guard, and grant that we may ever believe Thy word, and be at all times ready to say and know that Thou art the Son of God !

MARK, xv. 33-47.

AND when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me? And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, He calleth Elias. And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave Him to drink, saying, Let alone ; let us see whether Elias will come to take Him down. And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost. And the veil of the temple

was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. And when the centurion, which stood over against Him, saw that He so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God. There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome; (who also, when He was in Galilee, followed Him, and ministered unto Him;) and many other women which came up with Him unto Jerusalem. And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, Joseph of Arimathæa, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus. And Pilate marvelled if He were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether He had been any while dead. And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph. And he bought fine linen, and took Him down, and wrapped Him in the linen, and laid Him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre. And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses beheld where He was laid.

WE should observe what calmness of mind is conspicuous in the unimpassioned, but not unfeeling, manner in which the evangelists relate the cruel sufferings of their Divine Lord, as well as the obstinacy and insatiable malignity of His enemies: in all their narration, not one opprobrious epithet, not one severe expression, escapes them. Calmness such as this, is surely most inconsistent with every suspicion of fanaticism. And if we compare the particular predictions with the historical passages of our Lord's sufferings; if we join the prophets and evangelists together, it will manifestly appear that the Messiah was to suffer nothing which Christ has not suffered. Our

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Lord appeared as great in His sufferings as in His actions ; in His death as in His life. What a marvellous concurrence was here of strong and undoubted proofs ! Meekness in suffering, prayer for His murderers, a faithful resignation of His soul into the hands of His heavenly Father, the sun eclipsed, the heavens darkened, the earth trembling, the graves open, the rocks rent, the veil of the temple torn—who could say less than this, Truly this was the Son of God ? These proofs were sufficient to bring all the world upon their knees, and to make all mankind converts. But all hearts are not alike ; no means can work on the wilfully obdurate. May we not be backward in believing, and may we love Him to the end, that ere death draws near, we may prepare ourselves for the change we must all undergo, so as to be ready ‘to depart and be with Christ.’

MARK, xvi. 1–13.

AND when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint Him. And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre ? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away : for it was very great. And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment ; and they were affrighted. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted : Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified : He is risen ; He is not here : behold the place where they laid Him. But go your way, tell His disciples and Peter that He goeth

before you into Galilee: there shall ye see Him, as He said unto you. And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid. Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils. And she went and told them that had been with Him, as they mourned and wept. And they, when they had heard that He was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not. After that He appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them.

THE same women who had so firmly endured the sight of Jesus crucified, took courage also to attempt the anointing of His body, as it lay in the sepulchre of Joseph. For this purpose they bought sweet spices; they spared no expense in the honouring of One whom they so truly loved, and so deeply mourned; and Jesus, after rising from the dead, vouchsafed to be seen by the same faithful women, whose fitness to be witnesses had been proved in their attendance at the sepulchre and at the cross. The first use Mary made of this high privilege was to go and tell 'them that had been with Him as they mourned and wept.' This should teach us to be willing to communicate to others, especially to such as are in distress, the glad tidings of salvation. We should be ever ready to promote Christian knowledge, at home and abroad. We should all have compassion 'on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way.' Let us labour and persevere to make known to all we can the word of God. Let us hope, that by convincing and converting those nearest to ourselves, our words and works may go forth into the world, and help to 'preach the Gospel to every creature.'

MARK, xvi. 14–20.

AFTERWARD He appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen. And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen

By comparing together the accounts given by the different evangelists of the last instructions delivered by our Lord to His apostles, it sufficiently appears that by the expression, 'believing and being baptized,' St. Mark means believing, repenting, and obeying the Gospel; for he that embraces Christ's religion, and by baptism enters into an obligation to obey it, and lives accordingly, shall be saved; but he that rejects the Gospel, either by obstinate unbelief or impenitent disobedience, shall be condemned. From 'Jesus' we should seek salvation; from 'Christ' the anointed, as a Prophet, instruction; as a Priest, atonement; as a King, protection; and as 'the only begotten Son,' the adoption of children. As 'our Lord' we should serve Him in faith, in humility, in

patience, in crucifying sin, in mortifying the flesh, in burying the old man with his evil desires, in meditating on the other world, in newness of life, in setting our affections on things above, in awe of His second coming, and in judging ourselves before we come to be judged by Him. From the Spirit we should seek the breath of heavenly grace, that we may partake of a high and heavenly calling of sanctification, of communion with our brethren, in prayers and sacraments, in order to have a firm persuasion of the remission of our sins, as well as a confident hope of resurrection to life eternal. Thus is our creed at once a profession of faith, a manual of devotions, and a directory of practice: 'The just shall live by faith.'

THE GOSPEL OF ST. LUKE.

LUKE, i. 1-4.

FORASMUCH as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.

THE writer of this Gospel was no doubt the same individual who is so affectionately mentioned by St. Paul as 'Luke, the beloved physician.' There is every reason to believe that he was descended from Gentile parents, but had early embraced Judaism. He was not himself an eyewitness of the facts he here records, but he had ample opportunities of receiving an accurate account of them from Christ's disciples. Both His Gospel and the continuation of it in the Acts of the Apostles, seem to have been finished when Paul was yet at Rome, whither Luke accompanied him. It is therefore natural to conclude that these writings were submitted to the perusal of that apostle, and obtained his sanction previous to their publication. The first words, which are addressed to Theo-

philus, are spoken also to every one who reads or hears this Gospel. We may hence know the certainty of those things wherein we have been instructed. Thankful we ought to be that we have been taught, from father to son, to believe in Jesus Christ. May we then, by the study of it, learn to know the certainty of what we have believed, and be enabled to practise better the excellency of what we already know !

LUKE, i. 5-17.

THERE was in the days of Herod, the king of Judæa, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia : and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years. And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, according to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense. And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias : for thy prayer is heard ; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness ; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink ; and he shall be

filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

THE things to be believed in the Christian religion begin from the very outset to run in a strange and supernatural course. And this is one way by which we may know their certainty; for they are such as could not readily have obtained credit unless they had really happened. Let us take heed then that we continually discern the hand of God, ordering for our good, all things that here we read of. The visit of the angel who announced to Zacharias the miraculous birth of a son, is set down with all those circumstances of time and place which might best serve to verify the fact. The place also in which the angel stood, is recorded; and in his message we can discern the description of the child that was to be born. 'He shall be great in the sight of the Lord,' and by a thorough mortification of the flesh, he shall gain a complete victory over the world: for herein consisted that greatness of his character foretold by the angel. And being a preacher of repentance to the Jews, he was to work upon many of them, and bring them to the same heart and mind, which their fathers and progenitors had, who feared God, and believed His promises; in other words, that he was to convert them to the faith of that Christ in whom their fathers hoped, and for whom they looked, lest, (all continuing obstinate in their unbelief, till the day when a rejected Saviour should visit an apostate people,) the curse should be universal.

LUKE, i. 18-38.

AND Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years. And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee and to shew thee these glad tidings. And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season. And the people waited for Zacharias, and marvelled that he tarried so long in the temple. And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless. And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house. And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying, Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein He looked on me, to take away my reproach among men. And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call His name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His

father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God. And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible. And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

ZACHARIAS, who had before been pronounced 'blameless,' is here guilty of distrusting the angel's words. For this, a sign was given him, which also proved a punishment to him; for he found himself unable to speak 'until the day that these things were to be performed.' Let us learn from this history never to ask further of what God has once told us; and, however hard His sayings, let us speak, and think, and act, as being sure that they will in their season be fulfilled.

Six months after his visit to Zacharias, the same angel Gabriel was sent on a like Divine errand to the Virgin Mary. How different from the distrustful words of Zacharias was the modest inquiry of Mary, which arose, not from disbelief, but from wonder, and a desire to be satisfied how events so strange should be brought to pass. And to remove every doubt respecting the sure fulfilment of that which was now promised, the angel desires her to behold her cousin Elisabeth, who had been made to conceive a son, when past childbearing, by the miraculous power of God. How truly Mary expressed her consent, her humility, her faith, and her rejoicing, in the gracious purpose

of God. Give us, Lord, this faith, to repent unto amendment of life; to obey, not out of fear, but love; in the trust that there shall be a performance of those things which have been told us from Thee.

LUKE, i. 39-58.

AND Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda; and entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth. And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: and she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord. And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For He hath regarded the low estate of His handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For He that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is His name. And His mercy is on them that fear Him from generation to generation. He hath shewed strength with His arm; He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He hath sent empty away. He hath holpen His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy; as He

spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever. And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house. Now Elisabeth's full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son. And her neighbours and her cousins heard how the Lord had shewed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her.

THE address offered to Mary by Elisabeth, raised probably the same feeling of modest confusion as the angel's salutation; and in the hymn which followed, Mary gives full expression to all her mingled emotions of joy, gratitude, humility, and reliance on God's mercies, not only for herself, but for all those that fear Him, from generation to generation, or to the remotest ages, and this strongly resembles the hymn of Hannah, in which the Blessed Seed was first celebrated, and by a woman, under the title of the Messiah, Christ (anointed), or King of Israel. Then might we, as an antidote to all spiritual pride, repeat within ourselves these words of the Virgin Mary, for the Lord still helps the spiritual Israel, the children of the faith of Abraham; imparting to us that mercy of which He spake to our fathers—even redemption through Christ. 'And Mary abode with her about three months,' at the end of which time, after Mary's departure home, Elisabeth gave birth to John the Baptist. It is observable, that his nativity is the only one (that of Christ excepted) which the Christian Church celebrates. The days appointed for the commemoration of other saints, are generally those on which they ceased from their labours and entered into everlasting rest; but the nativity of St. John was designed to turn the eyes of men towards One that was far greater, the latchet of whose shoes he was not worthy to unloose. And as the Church keeps a day sacred to it, it directs us to meditate and consider 'what manner of child' that should be which was so wonderfully born.

LUKE, i. 59-80.

AND it came to pass, that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they called him Zacharias, after the name of his father. And his mother answered and said, Not so; but he shall be called John. And they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name. And they made signs to his father, how he would have him called. And he asked for a writing table, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marvelled all. And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, and praised God. And fear came on all that dwelt round about them: and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judæa. And all they that heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be! And the hand of the Lord was with him. And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He hath visited and redeemed His people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David; as He spake by the mouth of His holy prophets, which have been since the world began: that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant; the oath which He sware to our father Abraham, that He would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life. And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways; to give knowledge of salvation unto His people by the remission of their sins,

through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel.

THE occasion on which this hymn was composed was the birth of John the Baptist; the subject of it is the covenant of grace in Jesus Christ; the speaker is a Priest and a Prophet, 'filled with the Holy Ghost.' During a tedious interval of silence, Zacharias had beheld the accomplishment of the Divine promise to himself; and he likewise knew that the Saviour of mankind would soon be born of his relation, the Virgin Mary. We may judge, therefore, what pain and grief he felt while restrained from uttering that 'good matter' of which his heart was so full, that, when at length God saw fit to grant His permission, it burst forth at once in an impetuous and irresistible torrent of thanksgiving. St. John was the morning star, that preceded the Sun of righteousness at His rising; an event, the glory of which is due to the tender mercy of God, since towards the production of it, man can do no more than he can, towards causing the natural sun to rise upon the earth. The blessed effects of the dayspring which then dawned from on high, and gradually increased more and more unto the perfect day, were, the dispersion of ignorance, the awakening of men from sin, and the conversion and direction of their hearts and inclinations into 'the way of peace;' that is, of reconciliation to God by the blood of Christ, to themselves by the answer of a conscience cleansed from sin, and to one another by mutual love.

LUKE, ii. 1-7.

AND it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judæa, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David :) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

THE Roman Empire was proudly called 'the world,' and Augustus the Emperor ordered the people to be registered, as is here stated, probably for the purpose of knowing what taxes he might raise. How admirable was the providence of God, in so ordering the course of events, that this enrolment should take place at the very time of the birth of our Saviour, and that thus the prophecy of Micah, respecting His being born at Bethlehem, should be fulfilled. The Eastern people have no mangers for their horses, such as we have in England; but in their stables they have stone troughs, in which they lay their fodder, and the first resting-place of our Saviour was one of these. How can we sufficiently wonder at the humility of the Son of God! He, for whom heaven is too narrow, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, is not allowed, when He comes into the world, even the room of an inn! The

many mansions of heaven were at His disposal; the earth was His, and the fulness of it; yet He suffered Himself to be destitute of a mean cottage, and did not complain. How should we learn to want and abound, from Him, who, abounding with the glories and riches of heaven, wanted a lodging on His first welcome to the earth!

LUKE, ii. 8-14.

AND there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

THE same glorious light which attended the Divine Presence on several solemn occasions; which conducted the Israelites through the wilderness; which was visible when our Lord was transfigured; and which struck St. Paul to the earth at his conversion, shone round about these poor shepherds. The good tidings thus brought by the angels were of importance most universal and unlimited, filling all ages and all regions of the world with matter and with obligation of joy. If the heavenly host so glorified

God for the birth of the Redeemer of the world, what cause have men to adore the infinite love and mercy thus displayed towards them! It was for them, not for the angels, that God gave His only begotten Son. Great glory and honour be unto God in heaven, and great peace and happiness to man on earth, since, by the mercy of God, a Saviour is now sent unto them, by whom they may be instructed both to preserve peace among themselves, and to obtain reconciliation with God. Our blessed Lord brought 'peace on earth,' not only in a spiritual sense, by reconciling man to his offended Maker, and thus imparting to him true content and peace and satisfaction of mind, but also in a temporal sense. If ever peace was made visible in outward form, it was in the person of our blessed Lord. His whole life and conversation was one uniform representation of it, insomuch that it might be affirmed of Him, that 'of His peace there was no end.'

LUKE, ii. 15-24.

AND it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told

unto them. And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, His name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before He was conceived in the womb. And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought Him to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord; (as it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;) and to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons.

THE shepherds no sooner heard tidings of Christ than they wished to go 'even unto Bethlehem;' and after having done so, they returned full of gratitude to God, and rejoicing at the exact agreement which they found between what the angel had told them, and what they themselves had seen. The blessed Virgin had received a greater favour than ever was received by the daughters of Adam; and knowing from whence, and for whose glory she had received it, she returned the holy Jesus as a gift to God again; for she had nothing, the world had nothing, so precious as Himself, of which to make an oblation. Never was there before an act of adoration proportionable to the honour and majesty of the great God. But now there was; and it was made at the presentation of the child Jesus in the temple. We should ever bear in mind that He who was thus offered in the temple, afterwards offered, and still continues to present Himself, to appear in the presence of God for us. He it is whose infinite merits the Church in her prayers presents daily to God, and through whom alone ourselves and all our oblations are accepted in the heavenly kingdom.

LUKE, ii. 25-38.

AND, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for Him after the custom of the law, then took he Him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word: for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel. And Joseph and His mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of Him. And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary His mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; and she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

SIMEON looked forward, while he lived on earth, to the life of heaven, and desired nothing more than that he might

before he died behold Him, whom the Jews and all the world did look for,—the promised Messiah, the Consolation of afflicted Israel; for to him it had been expressly revealed ‘that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ.’ Simeon then truly departed in peace; for never from the creation was a more glorious event than the birth of the Son of God and the Redeemer of mankind. Well might he be content to close his eyes after having seen this salvation of God. Earth had no further charms for him; he desired to depart. Thus will it be with the just and devout Christian, whose heart is set upon the Lord’s Christ and the Consolation of Israel; who is led by the Spirit into the temple, there to find, to behold, to embrace, Him, by faith in His holy ordinances. There was also one Anna, a widow, who was allowed the same privilege that Simeon enjoyed, and from her example we are taught what returns we should make to heaven for the knowledge of salvation communicated to us; we should glorify God, and edify our neighbour, hoping at the end of our days to behold in the true temple our blessed Lord and Saviour, the light and the glory of the Church universal.

LUKE, ii. 39–52.

AND when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth. And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon Him. Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover. And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. And when they had fulfilled the days, as they re-

turned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and His mother knew not of it. But they, supposing Him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought Him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And when they found Him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking Him. And it came to pass, that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. And when they saw Him, they were amazed: and His mother said unto Him, Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us? behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing. And He said unto them, How is it that ye sought Me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? And they understood not the saying which He spake unto them. And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but His mother kept all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

MARY and Joseph diligently observed that law which expressly required the attendance of all the males at Jerusalem, to celebrate every year the three festivals, of which the Passover was one; and in their punctual compliance with the ordinances of their religion, and in their bringing up their child Jesus to the same, they have set an excellent example to parents of all ages and places. On these occasions it was the custom, for the greater security against robbers on the road, to travel in large companies, carrying necessaries with them, and tents for their lodging by night. How hard a service this must seem to those Christians who can scarce for one hour lay aside their daily business in order to visit the house of prayer; who excuse themselves from attending if the distance be ever so little fatiguing,

or the road ever so little inconvenient! Let us learn from this how easy is the yoke of Christ compared with the burden of the law. In the youth of our blessed Lord, as here described, what a pattern has He set to all children, of humility, submission, and reverence to their parents! How inexcusable their stubbornness and disobedience, when He, who was God as well as man, thought it right to submit to parental government, and was full of respect to them, whose Son He was in one capacity, while in another He was their Father, their Lord, their King and Creator. Most wisely did the inspired writer insert this passage in our meek Redeemer's life, as a singular ornament and grace to it; an early but remarkable instance of His marvellous condescension, and such a motive to profound reverence and humble duty to parents, as no laboured arguments can supply.

LUKE, iii. 1-9.

NOW in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judæa, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituræa and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; as it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough

ways shall be made smooth ; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God. Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come ? Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father : for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees : every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

By the law of Moses there was only one high-priest among the Jews, whose office continued for life ; but, since the conquest of Judæa by the Romans, it appears that they appointed the high-priest at their pleasure. It has been variously conjectured that Annas is here called high-priest together with Caiaphas, either, because having been deposed from the office by a heathen governor, he was still considered high-priest by the Jews ; or because he was at this time the deputy of the Jews ; or lastly, because he was the chief of the Sanhedrim. And it was at this time that John did, as here related, come preaching in the country round about Jordan. Now let us see in what his preaching consisted. He expressly declared that he was a messenger to prepare the way for One that should come after him. He preached ‘ the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.’ And most marvellous must have sounded to all hearers the tidings that such forgiveness was at hand ; and that not for one people, but for all : ‘ all flesh ’ should ‘ see the salvation of God.’ And in order to obtain this, we must indeed repent, so as to bring forth new fruit, which is at once acceptable to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

LUKE, iii. 10-22.

AND the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then? He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise. Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you. And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages. And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not; John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire: whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and will gather the wheat into His garner; but the chaff He will burn with fire unquenchable. And many other things in his exhortation preached he unto the people. But Herod the tetrarch, being reprovèd by him for Herodias his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison. Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased.

WITH fear and trembling the people applied to St. John with this question, 'What shall we do then?' for

they found all the vain opinions and presumptions, on which they had been so accustomed to rely, suddenly taken from them, and nothing left to them, but forthwith to place themselves under the direction of so holy and heavenly a preacher. In his answer, he enjoins not legal but evangelical sacrifices; exhorting his converts to show the sincerity of their conversion by loving their neighbours and relieving their necessities, as God had loved and relieved them. In preparing the way for Christ, St. John ran some risk of being mistaken for Him whose messenger he was. He therefore gave public testimony to One who should come after him mightier than himself, who should baptize, not with water only, but 'with the Holy Ghost and with fire.' And in these words is described also the power of that baptism which Christ instituted, and which is administered by His appointment among all nations of mankind. Thanks be to God that through Him our sins are forgiven, and our unprofitable service graciously received. Thanks be to God, that we too are now sons, if only like sons we love, sons of God, heirs with Christ, heirs, through Him, of everlasting life!

LUKE, iii. 23-38.

AND Jesus Himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli, which was the son of Matthat, which was the son of Levi, which was the son of Melchi, which was the son of Janna, which was the son of Joseph, which was the son of Mattathias, which was the son of Amos, which was the son of Naum, which was the son of Esli, which was the son of Nagge, which was the son of Maath, which was the son of Mattathias, which was the

son of Semei, which was the son of Joseph, which was the son of Juda, which was the son of Joanna, which was the son of Rhesa, which was the son of Zorobabel, which was the son of Salathiel, which was the son of Neri, which was the son of Melchi, which was the son of Addi, which was the son of Cosam, which was the son of Elmodam, which was the son of Er, which was the son of Jose, which was the son of Eliezer, which was the son of Jorim, which was the son of Matthat, which was the son of Levi, which was the son of Simeon, which was the son of Juda, which was the son of Joseph, which was the son of Jonan, which was the son of Eliakim, which was the son of Melea, which was the son of Menan, which was the son of Mattatha, which was the son of Nathan, which was the son of David, which was the son of Jesse, which was the son of Obed, which was the son of Booz, which was the son of Salmon, which was the son of Naasson, which was the son of Aminadab, which was the son of Aram, which was the son of Esrom, which was the son of Phares, which was the son of Juda, which was the son of Jacob, which was the son of Isaac, which was the son of Abraham, which was the son of Thara, which was the son of Nachor, which was the son of Saruch, which was the son of Ragau, which was the son of Phalec, which was the son of Heber, which was the son of Sala, which was the son of Cainan, which was the son of Arphaxad, which was the son of Sem, which was the son of Noe, which was the son of Lamech, which was the son of Matusala, which was the son of Enoch, which was the son of Jared, which was the son of Maleleel, which was the son of Cainan, which was the son of Enos, which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God.

It is seen that the genealogy of our Saviour, here given by St. Luke, is entirely different, as far as David, from that given by St. Matthew. Among the various

methods of explaining this which have been proposed, the most probable is, that whereas St. Matthew traced the genealogy through Joseph the husband of His mother, so St. Luke here traced it through Mary His mother. It is certain that Heli was not the natural father of Joseph, for St. Matthew expressly tells us that ‘Jacob begat Joseph;’ it is therefore inferred that Heli was the father of Mary and only father-in-law of Joseph. Thus it appears, that St. Luke, composing his Gospel for the use of the Gentiles, and intending to prove that Christ was the seed of the woman, necessarily reckons by the line of His mother, Mary the daughter of Heli. St. Matthew had contented himself with showing Jesus to be the son of Abraham, from whom the Scriptures had taught the Jews to expect that the Messiah would spring. St. Luke on the contrary traces this lineage up to Adam, and thus signifies that He is the seed of the woman promised to our first parents, as the common Saviour of them and all posterity, without distinction of Greek or Jew, bond or free; and that ‘as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.’

LUKE, iv. 1–13.

AND Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days He did eat nothing: and when they were ended, He afterward hungered. And the devil said unto Him, If Thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread. And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. And the devil, taking Him up into an high mountain, shewed unto Him all the kingdoms

of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto Him, All this power will I give Thee, and the glory of them : for that is delivered unto me ; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If Thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be Thine. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan : for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve. And he brought Him to Jerusalem, and set Him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto Him, If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down from hence : for it is written, He shall give His angels charge over Thee, to keep Thee : and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone. And Jesus answering said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from Him for a season.

JESUS retired into the wilderness, by the direction of the Spirit of God, which dwelt in Him fully and beyond measure. And for the space of forty days was our Lord exposed to the art and cunning of the tempter, sifted in every part, exposed to the horrors of the desert, and the necessities of hunger ! But neither these, nor the forty days' temptation, could move Him from His steadfast confidence and trust in God. And who was it that was exposed to these cruel trials and temptations ? Was it not He, whom God, but just before, had by a voice from heaven declared to be ' His beloved Son ? ' Can we then think that our temptations are any sign that God has forsaken us, that He has at once withdrawn His Spirit and His love from us ? Let us call to mind, that through all these dangers and difficulties, Christ has led the way ; that He, like us, nay, more than us, was tempted and exposed, and then we must blush at our complaints, and with confusion of face confess that we have charged God

foolishly, and say with the holy Psalmist, It is mine own infirmity. From what is here recorded, that the devil departed from Him for a season only, we should observe that men ought never to look upon themselves as secure from temptation. Wherefore we ought ever to watch and pray, to give the more earnest heed, lest at any time we should slip.

LUKE, iv. 14-21.

AND Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of Him through all the region round about. And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all. And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up: and, as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto Him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And He closed the book, and He gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on Him. And He began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.

SUCH was the excellency of the doctrine which Jesus taught, and such the greatness of the works by which He

confirmed it, that all men were struck with admiration, and looked upon Him as an extraordinary prophet. It was customary, when any grave person went to the synagogue, to invite him to read a portion of Scripture, and expound it. On this occasion Christ was called out as a member of the synagogue at Nazareth, His own city, to read the section or lesson of the prophets appointed for that day; and when He had stood up and read it, He sat down and expounded it. The passage of Isaiah, which Christ turned to and read, described the office He came to fulfil, and the benefits which He proposed to confer on the whole race of mankind. We were all poor, wanting in the first necessities of spiritual life. But He was sent to heal us, to give us a cheerful sense of His forgiveness, and a faithful conviction of His love. We may do well then to reflect, each within himself, that this is 'the acceptable year of the Lord.' 'This day is this scripture fulfilled in our ears.' Our turn is now come to hear it. Let us then fasten our eyes on Him, whose word, if we believe, will be made good, in the healing of our hearts, in the recovering of our sight, and in the deliverance of our souls from captivity. 'Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.'

LUKE, iv. 22-32.

AND all bare Him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son? And He said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Thy country. And He said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his

own country. But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian. And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up, and thrust Him out of the city, and led Him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast Him down headlong. But He passing through the midst of them went His way, and came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the sabbath days. And they were astonished at His doctrine: for His word was with power.

THE people, though amazed at the power and wisdom with which Jesus spake, and though they wondered whence He obtained such excellencies, yet because they knew He was Joseph's reputed son, and one brought up in an ordinary condition, they did not believe on Him. Jesus therefore said unto them, I know ye are prejudiced against me; and though ye are convinced of the goodness and excellency of my doctrine, yet ye cannot believe me unless I work more miracles to satisfy your curiosity. But even though I should do so, ye would not believe me; for so long as ye will judge of things by outward and temporal considerations, no conviction can be strong enough to conquer your unreasonable prejudices. How few, when they hear, do believe, or do what they learn, and perform what they resolve to do! We should hence learn, not only to be thankful, but watchful, when we see how Divine truth, if it fail to enlighten and convert the soul, is apt to provoke it to aggravated sin. All doctrines may

be acceptably preached, save the one which is most unpalatable to each man's taste. May we thankfully receive the hardest sayings, and prefer to the flattery of the world those truths by which, by repentance only, sin is forgiven, and by which only, through Christ crucified, are sinners saved !

LUKE, iv. 33-44.

AND in the synagogue there was a man, which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice, saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with Thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth? art Thou come to destroy us? I know Thee who Thou art; the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not. And they were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, What a word is this! for with authority and power He commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out. And the fame of Him went out into every place of the country round about. And He arose out of the synagogue, and entered into Simon's house. And Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever; and they besought Him for her. And He stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her: and immediately she arose and ministered unto them. Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto Him; and He laid His hands on every one of them, and healed them. And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God. And He rebuking them suffered them not to speak: for they knew that He was Christ.

And when it was day, He departed and went into a desert place : and the people sought Him, and came unto Him, and stayed Him, that He should not depart from them. And He said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also : for therefore am I sent. And He preached in the synagogues of Galilee.

THE words of the unclean spirit, whom our Lord, when in the synagogue, cast out, express feelings which, it is to be feared, are not uncommon among those to whom His healing influence is offered. ‘What have we to do with Thee?’ is the thought, if it be not often the very answer of a sinner, each time that he is taxed with his offence. Let us observe, then, who it is that we are thus tempted to reject, when we refuse good counsels or suppress good thoughts. It is Jesus of Nazareth, the Holy One of God. It is He who, by His Spirit, by His word, by the voice of a minister, or by the influence of a friend, would cast out the evil spirits which possess our souls, and would heal the fever of which we else must perish everlastingly. What a sad spectacle must have been all these sick persons, with divers diseases, brought together unto Christ! And how is it that we see daily, without fear and sorrow, the like signs of Satan’s work, in sin wasting the strength of the soul? Surely we must have some lurking hope that to be called a Christian, is a sufficient title to the heaven which is set forth for us to seek? Let it not be so with us. Grant, O Lord, that our works may ever speak His praise, and our hearts with thankfulness return His love, while our lips confess His Name! Teach us to say and feel, as we hear the tidings of redemption through Christ, not ‘What have we to do with Thee?’ but rather, ‘What can we do without Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of God?’

LUKE, v. 1-11.

AND it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon Him to hear the word of God, He stood by the lake of Gennesaret, and saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. And He entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And He sat down, and taught the people out of the ship. Now when He had left speaking, He said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto Him, Master, we have toiled all the night and have taken nothing: nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the net. And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken: and so was also James and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed Him.

THESE poor fishermen were not discouraged by the weariness of a whole night's fruitless labour, but willingly renewed their toil at the instance of our Lord. This is a seasonable warning to every servant of His, not to despond upon any unsuccessful trials in his Master's business, nor

to sink his spirits on account of any disappointments in the way of his ordinary calling, when he contemplates this eminent example of such a blessing upon a mind ready to labour at His word, and such large amends made at once for so many fruitless experiments before. The draught of fishes which they now took, and which nothing could have caused but the commanding power of Him who has all creatures at His disposal, and calls them together at such seasons and places as He sees fit, was a significant emblem of the indefatigable industry and most amazing success of these apostles in after times, when they became fishers of men. And our Saviour plainly gives Peter to understand, that this miracle was the figure of a richer and more plentiful prey; that his net should enclose the minds of reasonable creatures, and bring them into captivity to the Gospel. Blessed is this captivity to the Gospel, which is the only instrument, the indispensable condition, of our happiness!

LUKE, v. 12-26.

AND it came to pass, when He was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy: who seeing Jesus fell on his face, and besought Him, saying, Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean. And He put forth His hand, and touched him, saying, I will: be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him. And He charged him to tell no man: but go, and shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. But so much the more went there a fame abroad of Him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by Him of their infirmities. And He withdrew Himself into the wilderness, and prayed.

And it came to pass on a certain day, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judæa, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was present to heal them. And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before Him. And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus. And when He saw their faith, He said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee. And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone? But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, He answering said unto them, What reason ye in your hearts? Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (He said unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house. And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house glorifying God. And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things to day.

WE should observe what a deep, fixed, and constant piety was displayed by Christ. Nor was He content to nourish such a feeling in His soul, but He thought fit at sundry times to draw it forth in actual prayer, to clothe it in words, to betake Himself to visible devotion, and to retire to a mountain or wilderness for this express purpose. Let all who feel their hearts impregnated with religious fervour, remember this example; remember that this disposition

of the heart ought to vent itself in actual prayer ; let them not be either ashamed or afraid, nor suffer any person or any thing to keep them from this holy exercise. They will find the devout dispositions of their souls strengthened, gratified, confirmed. If any one should think that outward expressions of piety are superfluous, it is enough to answer, that our blessed Lord did not so think. In the miracle performed upon the man who was sick of the palsy, Jesus discerned acceptable faith, and He was guilty of no blasphemy, when either to this poor paralytic, or to that contrite woman who washed His feet with her tears, He vouchsafed to pronounce these comfortable words, ‘Thy sins are forgiven.’ He was Himself vested with His Father’s authority, was Himself God as well as man, the Maker and Governor of the world. And if here we have attained unto that heavenly pardon, let us not fail to glorify God, let us not be wanting in due fear and admiration at His work so full of mercy to our souls.

LUKE, v. 27–39.

AND after these things He went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom : and He said unto him, Follow me. And he left all, rose up, and followed Him. And Levi made Him a great feast in his own house : and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them. But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against His disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners ? And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician ; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

And they said unto Him, Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers, and likewise the disciples of the Pharisees; but Thine eat and drink? And He said unto them, Can ye make the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days. And He spake also a parable unto them; No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old; if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent, and the piece that was taken out of the new agreeth not with the old. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish. But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved. No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is better.

LEVI here spoken of was St. Matthew, the writer of the earliest Gospel. He was a publican, that is, a receiver of the public taxes, paying a rent for them to the Roman government. These dues were extremely odious to the Jews, as reminding them of their subjection to a foreign power. And this method of collecting them often tempted the collectors to be oppressive, for their own greater gain. Thus the very name of publican was held in general aversion and contempt. And thus Christ, in selecting Levi for an Apostle, has shown us that with God there is no respect of persons, trades, or employments. Nor did our Lord think it needful to refuse the entertainment which was made on the occasion, though the company chiefly consisted of men engaged in the same worldly occupation. And for this conduct He accounted by a proverb of very obvious application: 'They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick.' Such is our Lord's attention to our souls in their

afflicted state of sin. However deep then be the wounds of our iniquity, let us apply in prayer unto Him, with an entire reliance on His willingness to heal. Let us not conceive ourselves to be righteous, but own that we are miserable sinners; for such did He come to save.

LUKE, vi. 1-11.

AND it came to pass on the second sabbath after the first, that He went through the corn fields; and His disciples plucked the ears of corn, and did eat, rubbing them in their hands. And certain of the Pharisees said unto them, Why do ye that which is not lawful to do on the sabbath days? And Jesus answering them said, Have ye not read so much as this, what David did, when himself was an hungred, and they which were with him; how he went into the house of God, and did take and eat the shewbread, and gave also to them that were with him; which it is not lawful to eat but for the priests alone? And He said unto them, That the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath. And it came to pass also on another sabbath, that He entered into the synagogue and taught: and there was a man whose right hand was withered. And the scribes and Pharisees watched Him, whether He would heal on the sabbath day; that they might find an accusation against Him. But He knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth. Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing; Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it? And looking round about upon them all, He said unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he did so: and his hand was restored whole

as the other. And they were filled with madness; and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus.

THE two transactions here recorded may serve the better, when taken together, to explain to us the nature of the Christian sabbath. On this day of holy rest, as observed and enforced by our blessed Lord, it is lawful to do works of necessity, it is lawful to do works of charity. The disciples might pluck the ears of corn and eat; they might satisfy by this plainest of food their urgent hunger. Their Master, too, might heal the man that had a withered hand, that is to say, might do good, might save life. And the Pharisees, who found no fault with David when he went into the house of God and eat the shewbread, had no reason to find fault with the disciples. And if Christ could on the sabbath day make whole a hand that had been long withered, the Pharisees might be sure, and we too, that He was 'Lord also of the sabbath.' For it is indeed the Lord's day. It signifies, as argued in the Hebrews, the eternal rest secured in the life which is to come, for the people of God. It is the day on which our Lord rose from the dead 'for our justification.' And therefore it is a day to 'save life' and not 'to destroy it.' Nay, it is the fittest of all days for works of mercy, charity, and piety. May we be moved by His mercy to hallow it, as He has instructed us! May we commune with each other on this day, what we may 'do to Jesus' by help given to the poor, by instruction or example to the ignorant; of whom He has so plainly declared, that whatsoever we do unto one of the least of these His brethren, we do unto Him!

LUKE, vi. 12-19.

AND it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called unto Him His disciples: and of them He chose twelve, whom also He named apostles; Simon, (whom He also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphæus, and Simon called Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor. And He came down with them, and stood in the plain, and the company of His disciples, and a great multitude of people out of all Judæa and Jerusalem, and from the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear Him, and to be healed of their diseases; and they that were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed. And the whole multitude sought to touch Him: for there went virtue out of Him, and healed them all.

OUR Saviour seems to have passed the night in prayer, preparatory to the office which He was about to execute; that of appointing His Apostles; and surely, an important office it was, important to Him, important to His religion, important to the whole world. Here then we have an example given us, which we both can imitate, and ought to imitate. Nothing of importance, nothing of extraordinary moment, ought to be resolved upon or undertaken without prayer to God, without previous devotion. It is a natural operation of piety to carry the mind to God whenever anything presses and weighs upon it: they who feel not this tendency, have reason to accuse and suspect themselves of a want of piety. Moreover, we

have, as in this instance, the direct example for it of our Lord Himself, and it may be added, we have the example and the practice of good men in all ages of the world. As this great multitude is here said to have come to Christ 'to hear Him, and to be healed of their diseases,' so should we resort to Christ's ministers with like desire of cure and instruction. Let us in all they do, have respect unto Him whose ministers they are. And we might then, more largely than we do now, partake of that healing which He can through them impart.

LUKE, vi. 20-26.

AND He lifted up His eyes on His disciples, and said, Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh. Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets. But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation. Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep. Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.

THE blessings here pronounced, and the precepts continued to the end of this chapter, are in many respects the same as those in the Sermon on the Mount, recorded by

St. Matthew. But on comparing the order of events, it is evident that this discourse was delivered on a later occasion. Our Saviour says, 'Blessed be ye poor,' and blessed are ye who lament seriously your sins and follies, and endure patiently the afflictions and troubles of this mortal state: for the time will come when the present scene of things will be changed, when your pious desires will be fully satisfied, and all your sorrows turned into joy; but then He says, 'Woe unto you that are rich!' who enjoy riches without thankfulness, or spend them without any anxiety to do good, for ye in your lifetime have received your good things, and having received them without profit, will be intrusted with no more of God's blessings. Thus do these woes and blessings apply spiritually to all ranks and conditions of men. And how little of Christian faith can we have, if we can hear these words of our blessed Lord, and continue either to love riches if we have them, or to crave for them if we have them not; to spend them selfishly, to waste them foolishly, to hoard them uselessly, or even to give them indiscriminately.

LUKE, vi. 27-38.

BUT I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take thy coat also. Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again. And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those

that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven: give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.

WHAT degree and description of mercy is required of us by Christianity, is sufficiently explained by what is laid down here, and in the parallel passage of St. Matthew. It is that which does not restrain our affections and good offices to persons from whom we either have received, or reasonably may expect, the like: it is that which forgives our very enemies, forgives so as to love them; loves so as to do them good, liberally and cheerfully: it is that which conforms our practice to the example of that Father in heaven, who grudges not the daily returns of sun and rain, the blessings and conveniences of life, to those who daily provoke Him to anger, and forfeit all claim to those numberless benefits which are yet perpetually flowing from the fountain of all goodness. It is that mercy, in short, which renders us in this respect 'perfect, even as our Father which is in heaven is perfect.' And when we would aim at less than this, let us consider who it is that works in us, and gives us strength 'both to will and to do of His good pleasure.' And as we are our-

selves, as Christians, instances of divine mercy, enemies by nature made friends by grace, let us pray, and endeavour, and practise, to become friends of them who fain would hate us; and by our bounty, kindness, courtesy, and prayers, let us make them friends unto ourselves.

LUKE, vi. 39-49.

AND He spake a parable unto them, Can the blind lead the blind? shall they not both fall into the ditch? The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye. For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh. And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like: He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and

laid the foundation on a rock : and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it : for it was founded upon a rock. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth ; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell ; and the ruin of that house was great.

By the parable or proverb which our Lord spake to His disciples, He taught them the necessity of carefully attending to the true nature of His religion, in order that they might rightly instruct others in it, and might set an example in their own practice, of all those virtues which it was their duty to inculcate. And the more closely we follow His example, the more diligently we endeavour not to judge, but to help each other forward in the things that belong unto salvation, the nearer shall we attain to our Master's own perfection. If we look into our ordinary conversation, how much of it shall we commonly find to be made up of the very things which are here forbidden. Behold, then, how necessary unto salvation is the practice of a holy life ! Even as a firm foundation unto the safety of a house. And how can we be counted to lay that foundation, if we make light of Christ's own words, disobey His commands, and excuse ourselves if we hear His sayings without doing them ? God forbid that we should build without foundation, or lay other foundation than Jesus Christ ; or, blind as we are, that we should attempt to lead the blind, or pull out the mote from our brother's eye, when we behold not the beam that is in our own !

LUKE, vii. 1-10.

NOW when He had ended all His sayings in the audience of the people, He entered into Capernaum. And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die. And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto Him the elders of the Jews, beseeching Him that He would come and heal his servant. And when they came to Jesus, they besought Him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this: for he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue. Then Jesus went with them. And when He was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to Him, saying unto Him, Lord, trouble not Thyself: for I am not worthy that Thou shouldest enter under my roof: wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto Thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed Him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick.

It is stated by St. Matthew that the centurion came to Jesus: but here we read, that at first, at least, he did not go himself, but sent friends with his message in his stead, saying, 'I am not worthy that Thou shouldest enter under my roof: neither thought I myself worthy to come unto Thee.' But such was his earnest faith, that he was persuaded Christ was able to heal at a distance. This shows

that he thought Him willing as well as able to heal. And thus ought we to think of our Redeemer, when we become sensible of how deeply we need His help. Putting, therefore, our confidence in His merits, we shall have a sure ground of trust whereon to stand, a Friend by whom to send our prayers to God, to ask of Him His heavenly help, to go unto Him in His ordinances, and to hope that He will come and dwell with us. The more we are unworthy, or, at least, the more we feel ourselves to be so, the more shall we be persuaded that through Christ alone we have access to the Father, and that through Him we may have not access only, but also boldness to approach.

LUKE, vii. 11-18.

AND it came to pass the day after, that He went into a city called Nain; and many of His disciples went with Him, and much people. Now when He came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And He came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And He said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And He delivered him to his mother. And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited His people. And this rumour of Him went forth throughout all Judæa, and throughout all the region round about. And the disciples of John shewed Him of all these things.

As the miracles of our blessed Lord were generally works of mercy and compassion, so this was one of that description in an eminent degree; for there are few, if any, instances which the evangelists have represented in circumstances more fitted to move compassion. Here was a woman in a state of widowhood, a state friendless and forlorn, and frequently, therefore, mentioned in Scripture as one which God receives under His special protection. The young man was her only son, no remnant being left, when he was gone, to mitigate or supply the loss; and, at a time of life, when beginning to show forth the promises of youth, he was about to repay his mother's past tenderness and trouble, by becoming the stay and support of her age and infirmities. Her quiver was empty, her arrows broken or spent, and she stood naked and childless, without any help or sanctuary, except in that kind and tender God, who is a never-failing friend to the friendless. This complication of miseries the merciful Jesus saw, and felt, and relieved, by turning her tears into joy; and in an instant, by one commanding word, delivered the young man, both healthful and strong, to his mother. 'And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God.' Here was such fear as ends in love. Let us fear, so as to sin no more. Let us fear, so as not to love the less. Let us fear, so as to spread abroad as widely as we can our conviction of God's goodness and of our Saviour's love.

LUKE, vii. 19-35.

AND John calling unto him two of his disciples sent them to Jesus, saying, Art Thou He that should come? or look we for another? When the men were come unto Him, they said, John Baptist hath sent us unto Thee, saying, Art Thou He that should come? or look we

for another? And in that same hour He cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind He gave sight. Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me. And when the messengers of John were departed, He began to speak unto the people concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they which are gorgeously apparelled, and live delicately, are in kings' courts. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet. This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before Thy face, which shall prepare Thy way before Thee. For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he. And all the people that heard Him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of Him. And the Lord said, Whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation? and to what are they like? They are like unto children sitting in the marketplace, and calling one to another, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept. For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil. The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners! But wisdom is justified of all her children.

WHEN the rumour of all these miracles came to the ears of John the Baptist, he sent two of his disciples unto Jesus to enquire, 'Art Thou He that should come? or do we look for another?' And Jesus bade the messengers return with a report of the things which they had seen, and from which they might draw their own conclusions. Let each such miracle we hear or read of, remind us that Jesus was 'He that should come,' and let it convince us that He is our Saviour, the only Name given under heaven whereby we may have health and salvation. Our Lord then discoursed on the character of John, and on the waywardness of the Jews in objecting both to Himself and to the Baptist. The people who heard Him, and the publicans who were baptized with his baptism, are here said to have justified God; but nothing could more clearly prove this perversity of will in the Jews, when they pleaded such different objections in excuse for their unbelief. Never let us be so perverse. Let us feel how much more we have at stake than our present credit. To ensure this, our knowledge of God is concerned: in our knowledge, our right faith; and in our faith, our right practice. And on ours depends in some degree the Christian progress of all we are connected with. And on ours and theirs together is allowed, under God's providence, to depend His glory in the justifying of His Gospel to the world; for 'wisdom is justified of all her children.'

LUKE, vii. 36-50.

AND one of the Pharisees desired Him that He would eat with him. And He went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus

sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden Him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if He were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth Him : for she is a sinner. And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors : the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most ? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And He said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And He turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman ? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet : but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss : but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint : but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven ; for she loved much : but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And He said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meat with Him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also ? And He said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee ; go in peace.

IN this history, and in the parable of these debtors, we see set forth the whole scheme of God's mercy, as revealed to mankind through Jesus Christ. It is this ; that He

freely forgives sinners, and that they, thus freely forgiven, therefore love Him much. This woman, it is expressly said, was a sinner: now, she is not; her very appearing in our Lord's presence argues she is not. Had she continued in her evil courses, she would not have endured the sight of Christ. And our Lord said to Simon Peter, so far is this woman from being unworthy to come near Me by reason of her sins (which are indeed great and many), that, on the contrary, God has forgiven her those many and great sins on her sincere repentance. And the sense of that mercy has filled her heart with such ardent love and gratitude, that this renders her more worthy of My company than those who think themselves so holy as to need no forgiveness. Therefore He told her to go and enjoy that peace and satisfaction of mind, which a sense of the love and favour of God would continually afford her. What more can be wished for by any mortal creature, than remission, safety, faith, and peace? All these are here met to make a contrite soul happy: remission, the ground of her safety; faith, the ground of her peace; safety and salvation, the issue of her remission; peace, the blessed fruit of her faith.

LUKE, viii. 1-15.

AND it came to pass afterward, that He went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with Him, and certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, and Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto Him of their substance. And when much people were gathered together, and were

come to Him out of every city, He spake by a parable : A sower went out to sow his seed : and as he sowed, some fell by the way-side ; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock ; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns ; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold. And when He had said these things, He cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. And His disciples asked Him, saying, What might this parable be ? And He said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God : but to others in parables ; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand. Now the parable is this : The seed is the word of God. Those by the way side are they that hear ; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy ; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.

THE things which our Lord preached are here called 'the glad tidings of the kingdom of God.' Let us consider then, are they, or are they not, a subject of rejoicing to ourselves ? The tidings are the same, the tidings are glad, whether we receive them joyfully or not. If we receive them not joyfully, the fault must lie within ourselves. As the result then of this instructive parable, all Christians

should learn, that they ought to endeavour to fix the important truths of religion on their minds, by serious application of thought, careful remembrance, and frequent reflection. For the seed is in all cases the same; and its failure or success depends on the difference in the condition of the ground. We should bear in mind, that the word of God ought to influence all the powers of our souls, and bring them forth into action; that it is therefore called the seed, because it is the first and common principle whence all our virtue springs; that the end of it, therefore, is never answered, but by bringing forth fruit, and that fruit is no other than a holy conversation. If all men were deeply impressed with these considerations, they would learn to check all loose wanderings, to awaken all their faculties, and so to fix what they hear, firmly in their hearts, as to rise to the character of those who keep the word in an honest and good heart, and bring forth fruit with patience.

LUKE, viii. 16–25.

NO man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light. For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither any thing hid, that shall not be known and come abroad. Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have. Then came to Him His mother and His brethren, and could not come at Him for the press. And it was told Him by certain which said, Thy mother and Thy brethren stand without, desiring to see Thee. And He answered and

said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it. Now it came to pass on a certain day, that He went into a ship with His disciples: and He said unto them, Let us go over unto the other side of the lake. And they launched forth. But as they sailed He fell asleep: and there came down a storm of wind on the lake; and they were filled with water, and were in jeopardy. And they came to Him, and awoke Him, saying, Master, master, we perish. Then He arose, and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water: and they ceased, and there was a calm. And He said unto them, Where is your faith? And they being afraid wondered, saying one to another, What manner of man is this! for He commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey Him.

THE use of hearing and reading the word of God, is to improve by what we learn: and if our hearts and lives be not improved thereby, we shall be condemned for neglecting the opportunities which God is pleased to afford us for that purpose. And if it was needful for Him who spake as never man did, to bid His apostles themselves 'take heed' how they heard, much more ought the ministers of His Gospel, in succeeding times, to convey to all Christians the same caution: and no less are they bound to observe it; for to them, as well as to the apostles, the following words are addressed, 'whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have.' Do we watch with interest the growth of the seed we have sown? Let it remind us of God's grace sown in our hearts. If we have God's word in our memories, if we have the love of Christ in our hearts, we shall turn from admiring the stars which give light unto the night, or from reflecting on the winds and waves, to the thought of Him who created them,

and who can in a moment make them calm. May we have that calm within, which abides through all storms without! May we have that faith, which leaves no doubt; that love, which knows no fear; that love, by which faith works; that faith, which is perfect by love!

LUKE, viii. 26-40.

AND they arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, which is over against Galilee. And when He went forth to land, there met Him out of the city a certain man, which had devils long time, and ware no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before Him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of God most high? I beseech Thee, torment me not. (For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chain and in fetters; and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness.) And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he said, Legion: because many devils were entered into him. And they besought Him that He would not command them to go out into the deep. And there was there an herd of many swine feeding on the mountain: and they besought Him that He would suffer them to enter into them. And He suffered them. Then went the devils out of the man, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked. When they that fed them saw what was done, they fled, and went and told it in the city and in the country. Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the

man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid. They also which saw it told them by what means he that was possessed of the devils was healed. Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought Him to depart from them; for they were taken with great fear: and He went up into the ship, and returned back again. Now the man out of whom the devils were departed besought Him that He might be with Him: but Jesus sent him away, saying, Return to thine own house, and show how great things God hath done unto thee. And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him. And it came to pass, that, when Jesus was returned, the people gladly received Him: for they were all waiting for Him.

THAT man must fare ill in his spiritual course, who forgets that he has to struggle against being such as we here read of. Many times when he least expects it, he will find himself led astray into the neglect of God's commands, or violently running down some steep descent of pleasurable sin. And yet few of us probably think as often as we ought, and none of us as seriously and as watchfully, of the evil influence of these wicked spirits, and of the true method of resisting their attempts. Let us look then to God's word for right notions of a matter, in which we can have no other means of information. There we learn that there is an evil angel called Satan, and others his companions or servants, who have access in some manner, we know not how, to our hearts, stirring up all our worst thoughts, and preventing to the uttermost all that are good. When such is our condition, rather than say to Christ, 'Torment me not,' let us say, 'Lord, torment me;' and if by any affliction it may please God to visit us, so as to bring us to

our right minds, let us heartily rejoice, and may God give us grace to choose aright, and to abide by our choice with joy for ever.

LUKE, viii. 41-56.

AND, behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue: and he fell down at Jesus' feet, and besought Him that He would come into his house: for he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying. But as He went the people thronged Him. And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, came behind Him, and touched the border of His garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanch'd. And Jesus said, Who touched me? When all denied, Peter and they that were with Him said, Master, the multitude throng Thee and press Thee, and sayest Thou, Who touched me? And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me. And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before Him, she declared unto Him before all the people for what cause she had touched Him, and how she was healed immediately. And He said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace. While He yet spake, there cometh one from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying to Him, Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master. But when Jesus heard it, He answered him, saying, Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole. And when He came into the house, He suffered no man to go in, save Peter, and James, and John, and the father and the mother of the maiden. And all

wept, and bewailed her: but He said, Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed Him to scorn, knowing that she was dead. And He put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise. And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway: and He commanded to give her meat. And her parents were astonished: but He charged them that they should tell no man what was done.

IN these two miracles, we may observe the influence of faith in two different characters. Jairus 'fell down at Jesus' feet;' the woman 'came behind, and touched the hem of His garment.' This in her was humility,—yet there was no lack of humility in the ruler; only in him, faith wrought the eagerness of prayer. No mistake can be more dangerous, than to think that knowledge is the sure road to faith. Rather, we must believe, ere we can truly know. So did both this woman and Jairus. For though Jairus supposed that Christ could heal the sick, he knew not that He could raise from the dead. But what did our Lord then require? 'Fear not, believe only.' Let us then believe all that He has said, and He will add to our faith, knowledge. Or if in this life such knowledge be too wonderful for us, we shall be sure to enjoy it in the next. This is to be the great object of our hope, the life to come. And this one chief thing we must believe of our Lord, that He is able to raise us from the dead. For this much we may learn for our comfort, that death, under the control of our blessed Lord, is, unto all them that believe in Him, only as the repose of sleep, and at His coming we shall arise, not to a state of trial, but to a crown of victory; to a heaven where there shall be neither toil nor sleep, but life perpetual, and at God's right hand pleasure for evermore.

LUKE, ix. 1-9.

THEN He called His twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. And He sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick. And He said unto them, Take nothing for your journey, neither staves, nor scrip, neither bread, neither money; neither have two coats apiece. And whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide, and thence depart. And whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet for a testimony against them. And they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing every where. Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done by Him: and he was perplexed, because that it was said of some, that John was risen from the dead; and of some, that Elias had appeared; and of others, that one of the old prophets was risen again. And Herod said, John have I beheaded: but who is this, of whom I hear such things? And he desired to see Him.

THE twelve disciples were sent forth to preach the kingdom of God, and were empowered to confirm their preaching by the working of signs and wonders. The preaching of the apostles seems to have been one of the chief means by which the fame of Jesus reached Herod. Upon hearing of His mighty works, and the different reports of His being John, or Elias, or some other of the old prophets, he is both perplexed and also desirous to see Him. This is a common case with those who hear the Gospel faithfully preached; on the one hand is shown an unprofitable curiosity, on the other a painful perplexity. They desire to see, they desire to hear, they desire to

know; but they do not desire to believe or to obey. And when they hear and understand, how great is their difficulty! Never may we so hear with perplexity! Never so desire, without purpose to obey! Never may we so hesitate in doing the will of Christ; never so doubt in believing His truth!

LUKE, ix. 10-22.

AND the apostles, when they were returned, told Him all that they had done. And He took them, and went aside privately into a desert place belonging to the city called Bethsaida. And the people, when they knew it, followed Him: and He received them, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing. And when the day began to wear away, then came the twelve, and said unto Him, Send the multitude away, that they may go into the towns and country round about, and lodge, and get victuals: for we are here in a desert place. But He said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they said, We have no more but five loaves and two fishes; except we should go and buy meat for all this people. For they were about five thousand men. And He said to His disciples, Make them sit down by fifties in a company. And they did so, and made them all sit down. Then He took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, He blessed them, and brake, and gave to the disciples to set before the multitude. And they did eat, and were all filled: and there was taken up of fragments that remained to them twelve baskets. And it came to pass, as He was alone praying, His disciples were with Him: and He asked them, saying, Whom say the people that I am?

They answering said, John the Baptist; but some say, Elias; and others say, that one of the old prophets is risen again. He said unto them, But whom say ye that I am? Peter answering said, The Christ of God. And He straitly charged them, and commanded them to tell no man that thing; saying, The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day.

THE apostles told Christ all they had done. This may be a pattern for us in our practice of self-examination. Not unto ourselves, but unto Him, who is ever present, we should daily lay our inmost thoughts; and learn, as from Him, and from His blessed word, both how to repent of our worst doings, and how to amend our best. Whilst the people took Jesus for John the Baptist, for Elias, or for one of the elder prophets, the apostles, by the mouth of St. Peter, expressed the great truth of the Gospel,—that He was ‘the Christ of God.’ They then who are most near to Him, they who are most closely acquainted with His words and works, these should most deeply feel, most openly profess, this certain truth. Hence we learn how much we have to answer for, enjoying as we do the full knowledge of the Gospel; how closely we are bound to own Him for the Christ, by loving Him, and serving Him, as the Saviour of our souls. But no sooner is He acknowledged by the apostles to be Christ, than He warns them how ‘the Son of man must suffer.’ And from His charging them to tell no man He was the Christ, He was aware how the cross He had to suffer would prove a scandal both to others and to themselves. Ill does it become us to make a profession of Christianity, unless we receive into our hearts this humiliating truth, unless we can be faithful to Christ when on the cross, as well as to Christ entered into His glory. It pleased God to make the

Captain of our salvation perfect through suffering. This ought to satisfy all doubts, humble all pride, and make us place all our trust in Christ crucified.

LUKE, ix. 23-36.

AND He said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away? For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels. But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God. And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening. And, behold, there talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elias: who appeared in glory, and spake of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem. But Peter and they that were with Him were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw His glory, and the two men that stood with Him. And it came to pass, as they departed from Him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what he said. While he thus spake, there came

a cloud, and overshadowed them : and they feared as they entered into the cloud. And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son : hear Him, And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone. And they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen.

IF we are ashamed of the cross of Christ, if we are not resolved to take it up ourselves, our sentence is here fearfully set forth,—‘Of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father’s, and of the holy angels.’ This, then, is the difficulty that besets us every hour of our lives. For we must take up our cross ‘daily,’ in order to be counted true followers of Christ. Let us then ever look up to Him as our pattern and example, and let us pray for strength to do as He did. Behold how He entered on all His great works with prayer in His mouth ! When He was to enter on that great work of His humiliation, in His passion, He went into the garden to pray ; when He was to enter on this great work of His exaltation, in His transfiguration, He went up into the mountain to pray. He was taken up from His knees to both. What a noble example is this to us of piety and devotion ! And as it was whilst our Lord prayed that ‘the fashion of His countenance was altered,’ so with us also will prayer change both the face without and the heart within, making the countenance express that cheerfulness and love which it enables the soul to feel. But how far do we fall short, in diligence and pains, of the great objects we profess to be aiming at ! When we are roused from our condition of indifference, we long to be with Christ where He is. But the valley of the shadow of death must first be encountered, and that, in most cases, with fear and trembling. Blessed be God, that in the midst of the cloud His voice has been heard

to say, 'This is my beloved Son!' And blessed be His name, that we through His Son are called to be sons also; accepted through His precious blood!

LUKE, ix. 37-48.

AND it came to pass, that on the next day, when they were come down from the hill, much people met Him. And, behold, a man of the company cried out, saying, Master, I beseech Thee, look upon my son: for he is mine only child. And, lo, a spirit taketh him, and he suddenly crieth out; and it teareth him that he foameth again, and bruising him hardly departeth from him. And I besought Thy disciples to cast him out; and they could not. And Jesus answering said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, and suffer you? Bring thy son hither. And as he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him. And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him again to his father. And they were all amazed at the mighty power of God. But while they wondered every one at all things which Jesus did, He said unto His disciples, Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men. But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not: and they feared to ask Him of that saying. Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest. And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child, and set him by Him, and said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me receiveth Him that sent me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great.

JESUS continued repeatedly to charge His disciples not to suffer themselves to be elated with expectations of power and glory, but frequently to call to mind, and meditate upon, what He now forewarned them would take place, to the end that they might be duly prepared for so severe a trial, and not be surprised and terrified at the time of His suffering. Whatever, therefore, be our conflict, whatever our success, let us in the moment of victory call to mind that we have so much the more need of constant watchfulness. This life is for warfare, the next for triumph. Here we must bear the shame of the cross, hereafter share the glory. Our adversary having ever some new plot for our destruction, we must never consider ourselves safe until, like our Lord, we shall have been delivered up to death. May He, who for our sakes underwent that last and most fearful struggle, enable us to pass through it unhurt, both preserving us in safety until the close of life, and suffering us not in our last hour for any pains of death to fall from Him !

LUKE, ix. 49-62.

AND John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy name ; and we forbad him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not : for he that is not against us is for us. And it came to pass, when the time was come that He should be received up, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before His face : and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for Him. And they did not receive Him, because His face was as though He would go to Jerusalem. And when His disciples James and John saw this, they

said, Lord, wilt Thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But He turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village. And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto Him, Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head. And He said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow Thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

WHEN the time was drawing near, at which, having fulfilled His prophetic office, our Lord was to finish His ministry and to leave the world, He positively resolved, notwithstanding the known malice of His enemies, to go up to Jerusalem; this being absolutely necessary, in order to fulfil the other great purposes for which He came into the world. On the refusal of the Samaritans to receive Him, the disciples here acted under an impulse which bespoke the highest veneration for their Master, and zeal for His interest. But this was not what our Lord approved of, and His rebuke completely repels the feeling under which the apostles acted, for as the Gospel is a dispensation of compassion and love; so to promote it by methods of vigour and revenge, would be to employ means most unsuited to the end. Our Saviour came not to distress men or shorten their days, but to spread among them

blessings of every description. When we look upon the sacred acts and monuments of His life, we find many a life which He preserved from perishing; some that had perished, by Him recalled; never any by Him destroyed. Only one poor fig-tree, as the real emblem of His severity to the unfruitful, was blasted and withered by His curse! But to man He was ever favourable and indulgent; how, then, can we sufficiently love and praise His mercy? How should we imitate His saving and beneficent disposition towards mankind? for the more we can help and save our fellow-creatures, the nearer we come to Him who came to save all mankind!

LUKE, x. 1-16.

AFTER these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before His face into every city and place, whither He Himself would come. Therefore said He unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He would send forth labourers into His harvest. Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves. Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes: and salute no man by the way. And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house. And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again. And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the labourer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house. And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you: and heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. But

into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say, Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you : notwithstanding be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city. Woe unto thee, Chorazin ! woe unto thee, Bethsaida ! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell. He that heareth you heareth me ; and he that despiseth you despiseth me ; and he that despiseth me despiseth Him that sent me.

It appears that Jesus was still on His journey towards Jerusalem, but made short stages, preaching in many places as He went. And He appointed seventy disciples to go 'before His face into every city and place, whither He would come ;' and as the apostles were the same in number with the tribes of Israel, so these seventy disciples corresponded with the seventy elders of whom we read in the book of Exodus. The instructions of these seventy are nearly the same as those given to the apostles ; conveying the same general advice to trust for their support to God's special providence ; to consider themselves as labourers in God's spiritual harvest ; and, both by healing and by faithful warning, to promote amongst mankind God's kingdom. To live under a ministry, thus divinely appointed, is a privilege which lays a heavy responsibility on those who enjoy it. They see not indeed the mighty works of Christ, but they have heard, or they may hear those, whom He has appointed to commemorate them to the end of time. In a Christian land, in a country where

there is a Christian Church, who is there so out of the reach of Christian instruction that he can stand on the same ground with them of Tyre and Sidon? Who is there but must tremble then to think, that *they* would have repented, if *he* has not? so that, wicked as they were, and devoted to destruction, yet for them it may be more tolerable in the day of judgment than for him.

LUKE, x. 17-24.

AND the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through Thy name. And He said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven. In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight. All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him. And He turned Him unto His disciples, and said privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see: for I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.

THE disciples returned rejoicing that 'the devils were subject unto them,' inasmuch as that tended to promote the glory of God and the establishment of the Gospel: but, to be worthy of salvation by God, and through faith in Christ, and to have a present claim to an inheritance in heaven, was a blessing peculiar to the saints, tending to the eternal welfare of their souls, therefore Christ bids them rejoice the 'rather' on that account. It is remarkable that our blessed Lord broke forth into the same rapturous expression of praise and thanksgiving to God, on the former occasion also of the return of the twelve apostles from executing their commission. And well may Christians of the present day, 'blessed' with the glorious light of the Gospel, who 'have not seen, but yet have believed' in Christ, as their 'Lord and their God,' express their exultation and gratitude to God and Christ, in similar language of praise. Let us then pray to Him, that of His mercy He will make us to know both the Father and the Son; that He will make us to know them to our joy; and that He will enable us, according to the rule of the apostle, to 'rejoice in the Lord alway.'

LUKE, x. 25-37.

AND, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted Him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And He said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto

Jesus, And who is my neighbour? And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

OUR Lord's first design in relating this parable, was to prove to the person with whom He was discoursing, that true charity required more than he imagined. His other and main intention was, to teach all persons the nature and extent of benevolence and brotherly love. In this, as in some other of our Lord's discourses, may be observed a wonderful art of persuasion, and a masterly way of gaining a controverted point by setting examples and facts before prejudiced persons, and making them draw their own conclusions. Jericho was a considerable place in the days of our Saviour. The road to it from Jerusalem was much frequented, as it was the high road over Jordan to Perea. It was principally through a wild and rocky country, and much infested with robbers; and, from the frequency of

the murders committed there, was called 'the bloody way.' Some think, that what is here related, was not mere fiction, but real history, and our Saviour purposely describes, in the most affecting terms, the distress of this poor man, that He might inspire the Jews with a greater abhorrence of that vile principle which could so far change the natural tempers of the Priest and Levite as to make them void of compassion towards an object so completely miserable. And with divine gentleness our Lord makes this parable a vehicle for reproof, by also giving an example of humanity and mercy, which, by gaining their admiration, might excite them to imitate it; an example the more noble and affecting, as 'the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.' Thus we are to learn that no difference of nation or religion, no distinction of party, nor division of interests or affections, should ever restrain us from owning every one as our neighbour, or prevent us from being ready to 'go and do likewise.'

LUKE, x. 38-42.

NOW it came to pass, as they went, that He entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard His word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to Him, and said, Lord, dost Thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

THE history of Martha and Mary, whilst it forms a most striking lesson to the female Christian, is full of profitable instruction for us all. The duty which it enforces is this, that we should choose rather 'the one thing needful,' which our Lord here gives us to understand, is an earnest desire of spiritual instruction and improvement, which is so absolutely needful to salvation that no man ever was or can be saved without it. Now this was Mary's choice. Martha, like many others engaged in the bustle of active life, was so overwhelmed with family cares and embarrassments, and so anxious to provide an entertainment worthy of her illustrious guest, that she fancied everything else ought to give way to it, and that her sister Mary was wasting her time sitting at the feet of Jesus, and listening to His heavenly discourses. How astonished she must have been when, on calling to her sister to help her, she received from our Lord the reproof here related, mingled with the most affectionate and salutary advice to her and to all those who happen to entertain similar sentiments! And how few are there among all Christians who uniformly act with a view to this needful thing! Grant, Lord, that we may never be so cumbered with the cares of this present life, as in any way to neglect the salvation of our souls! Give us grace to have a true and saving faith, and hearken unto us, whilst with all our hearts we pray, Lord, save our souls alive!

LUKE, xi. 1-13.

AND it came to pass, that, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught

his disciples. And He said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. And He said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?

OF all the requests made to our Saviour, which are recorded in the New Testament, this may be accounted among the most just and judicious. It was answered by that form of supplication which we commonly call the Lord's Prayer. As the ten commandments are a sum of all our duty, or what is to be done, so this prayer is a sum of all things to be desired. The commandments were given as well as the prayer, that we might see our duty and pray

for ability to perform it. The ten commandments were twice rehearsed, and so this prayer was twice delivered; first in the sermon on the mount, and again afterwards about a year later. Let us pray then with confidence, as being assured that it is a Father whom we address. Let us pray as sons who rely on Him for support, and who doubt not that we shall receive it at His hands. Let us pray for the honouring of His name, for the coming of His kingdom, for the fulfilment of His will. Let us pray for our own forgiveness and deliverance from sin, for grace to assist us when tempted, and yet rather to be saved from temptation. Let us pray for wisdom to direct our prayers aright, and for devout attention that we may offer them without offence to Him before whose throne we kneel, for then we may feel sure that our Heavenly Father will 'give the Holy Spirit,' that best of all good gifts, 'to them that ask Him.'

LUKE, xi. 14-26.

AND He was casting out a devil, and it was dumb. And it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake; and the people wondered. But some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils. And others, tempting Him, sought of Him a sign from heaven. But He, knowing their thoughts, said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth. If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub. And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges. But if I with the finger of God cast out

devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you. When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils. He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth. When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.

WE need frequently to be reminded that we have an active spiritual enemy. And we ought to be sensible of our danger, and turn our thoughts to the right method of avoiding it. The unclean spirit may indeed have gone out. Our house may to all outward appearance be 'swept and garnished.' Gross acts of transgression may have ceased; but the enemy is restless—the defence is weak. And if the abode which He has left be not filled in the mean time, with 'all the fulness of God,' the evil one will find no difficulty in returning; and then 'the last state of that man is worse than the first.' It is worse, because it is harder for him to be again stirred up. It is worse, because he may very probably never live to have another opportunity of deliverance. It is worse, because the enemy will have got stronger hold. It is worse, because He who alone can help, will not always by His Spirit strive with man. It is worse, for Christ has said that so it is. Grant, O Lord, that we may never fall away from the grace we have once attained, may lose no advantage we once have got; but may have our last state daily better than the first!

LUKE, xi. 27-36.

AND it came to pass, as He spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto Him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked. But He said, Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it. And when the people were gathered thick together, He began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet. For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here. The men of Nineve shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here. No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light. The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness. If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.

So full and convincing were our Saviour's arguments, so just and striking the judgment He passed on those disbelievers, that though we are not told of any great impression made on their hearts, yet one of the standers-by, who heard

them without prejudice, and considered the weight and power of what had been said, was impelled to exclaim with rapture and admiration, 'Blessed is the womb that bare Thee, and the paps which Thou hast sucked!' It was no doubt a distinguished favour to be the mother of our Lord; but, though this could be the lot of only one person, yet, as our Saviour here declares, there is a far superior happiness, even that of heaven open to every one that will attend to obey the will of God:—'Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.' See, then, what is required of us; to labour for knowledge, and to improve in grace: to spare no pains in our search for wisdom, and no sacrifice in our endeavours to amend: to take heed to the light that is in us, and to take heed that it be not darkness; to take pains to hear the word of God, and to take pains to keep it. And above all, when we hear it, we must repent at the preaching of it; we must believe; we must obey.

LUKE, xi. 37-54.

AND as He spake, a certain Pharisee besought Him to dine with him: and He went in, and sat down to meat. And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that He had not first washed before dinner. And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. Ye fools, did not He that made that which is without make that which is within also? But rather give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you. But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

Woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them. Then answered one of the lawyers, and said unto Him, Master, thus saying thou reproachest us also. And He said, Woe unto you also, ye lawyers! for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers. Woe unto you! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres. Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute: that the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; from the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation. Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye enter not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered. And as He said these things unto them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to urge Him vehemently, and to provoke Him to speak of many things: laying wait for Him, and seeking to catch something out of His mouth, that they might accuse Him.

OUR Lord, who had sat at meat with Publicans, now refuses not to dine with Pharisees, who, esteeming themselves righteous, were therein the greater sinners of the two. He prepares to instruct them, by first omitting some trifling ceremony of washing to which they attached undue importance; whereupon they had no sooner marvelled, than He pointed out to them the folly of

attending so much to outward washing, whilst they neglected all inward purity. This is what His discourses continually aim at. This is what we ought to esteem the very substance of Christian obedience; namely, that which is in the heart within. How may we be made clean in His sight? How, but by having our souls washed in His most precious blood? No other cleansing can avail. No outward ceremony can suffice. We must believe in order to be saved. We must believe in order to be cleansed. And when we believe, so as to give alms of such things as we have; when we believe, so as to love; when we believe, so as to love all mankind, for this reason, that Christ hath loved us, then all things are clean to us. There is nothing we can do wrong when we do all in love, all in faith. 'To the pure all things are pure.' To them that are cleansed by the blood of Christ all things are clean. All things that they who love God can love to do, are holy, just, and good.

LUKE, xii. 1-12.

IN the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto His disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops. And I say unto you, my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear Him, which after He hath killed

hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear Him. Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows. Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God. But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God. And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven. And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.

OUR Lord here commands His disciples, when they are teaching others, to speak not for the applause of men; to conceal none of the things in which they were instructed, whether acceptable to men or not, but with courage and constancy to proclaim His doctrine, and to preach from henceforward in the most public places, and proclaim openly to all the world what they had hitherto learned and discoursed only privately amongst themselves. When, therefore, we consider the slight importance of the body compared with the soul, we ought to banish from our minds the fear of man, and to fear Him only 'which, after He hath killed, hath power to cast into hell.' For we are of 'more value than many sparrows.' He it is who notes those sparrows which we so lightly value; He it is who numbers the very hairs of our head. Therefore ought we never to be 'afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass;' never should we be so afraid as to forget the Lord our Maker,

‘that hath stretched forth the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth;’ who hath made both body and soul, and can destroy them both for ever. And, especially, let us beware, lest, out of fear of man, we, in any sense, in any degree, commit the great sin of openly denying what is true in Christ Jesus. For the end of those that do so, is this :— they ‘shall be denied before the angels of God.’

LUKE, xii. 13–21.

AND one of the company said unto Him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And He said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? And He said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness; for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. And He spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

FROM the incident just related, our Saviour takes occasion to warn His disciples and all the people of the

evil of covetousness. Take heed, then, that ye set not your heart on riches as your principal source of happiness, for they are so far from being really such, that, on the contrary, the true enjoyment and comfort of life does not at all depend on a man's having many and great possessions. And the purport of this parable is to show that wealth is no security to its possessors; that it is folly to pretend to arm ourselves against the accidents or casualties of life by heaping up treasures, for nothing can protect us against them but the good providence and care of our heavenly Father. In this point all the circumstances of the parable meet: the rich man is represented as flowing in plenty; this plenty made him forget God, and vainly imagine that he had a security in his own hands against all the calamities of life; his riches made him promise himself many happy days and years. But God reproves him for his folly, and checks him in his presumptuous security; for, at the very instant that he was applauding himself, promising himself much pleasure, and calling himself a happy man, God suddenly struck him with a mortal disease, and all his contrivances perished in a moment. How much better then is it to be found spending freely, and giving liberally, as faithful stewards of God's good gifts!

LUKE, xii. 22-40.

AND He said unto His disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment. Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God

feedeth them : how much more are ye better than the fowls ? And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit ? If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest ? Consider the lilies how they grow : they toil not, they spin not ; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven ; how much more will He clothe you, O ye of little faith ? And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after : and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God ; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock ; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell that ye have, and give alms : provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning ; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding ; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching : verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also : for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.

IN the parable of the rich man, whose ground brought forth plentifully, we have seen the folly of covetousness. We are now to consider what is the disposition with regard to wealth, which, as Christians, we may rightly entertain. It is described by the words, 'Take no thought.' If then we are, as we suppose ourselves, better than the fowls, we should trust that with due industry on our own part God will give us also all such things as are needful. Blessed and thrice happy is that little flock that has such a Father who will give them such a kingdom as is here promised, an everlasting kingdom in the heavens. And what are all the kingdoms of the world compared to that? With what satisfaction does the good man look over into the other world, where he has provided for himself 'bags which wax not old?' For though our wealth will not follow us beyond the grave, our good works will; works of mercy and charity will comfort us at the hour of death, and plead for us at the day of judgment, and procure for us, through the merits of our Redeemer, at the hands of God, a glorious recompense at the resurrection of the just. And it is His promise to His servants, that 'if He shall come in the second watch, or in the third watch, and find them watching, blessed are those servants.'

LUKE, xii. 41-48.

THEN Peter said unto Him, Lord, speakest Thou this parable unto us, or even to all? And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath. But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; the lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

WE may consider this as an explanation of the parable in the preceding passage; and especially as enforcing the application of that parable: 'Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.' How vain then is it to put off our own amendment till in sickness, or affliction, or old age, we shall have, as we are apt to reckon, (but without any certainty,) some more notice of our Lord's coming.

Our Saviour here affirms, that according to the degree of knowledge which God has afforded to men, so will their crimes receive aggravation of guilt, and be visited with increase of punishment. And the more light and grace He bestows on any, the greater and more perfect Christian performances He will require of them. And when we come into the other world, no consideration will sting us more than this, that we did wickedly, when we knew how to do better; that we chose to make ourselves miserable, when we knew so well the way to make ourselves happy. Let us strive then so to do, that whensoever Thou comest,

we may be found acceptable in Thy sight. And the more Thou hast committed to us, either by means or graces, the more of honour let us daily offer, by their due improvement unto Thee.

LUKE, xii. 49-59.

I AM come to send fire on the earth ; and what will I, if it be already kindled ? But I have a baptism to be baptized with ; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished ! Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth ? I tell you, Nay ; but rather division : for from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father ; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother ; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And He said also to the people, When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower ; and so it is. And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat ; and it cometh to pass. Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth ; but how is it that ye do not discern this time ? Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right ? When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, as thou art in the way, give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him ; lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison. I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite.

THIS passage contains several important lessons. The first, addressed by Christ to His disciples, is this; that His Gospel will not ensure us a peaceable life in this present world. It will indeed, if we truly believe, give us peace in ourselves. But, owing to the evil passions of those amongst whom true believers live, it will often expose them to persecution and strife from without. Our Lord here also intimates the purpose for which He had taken upon Him our nature; and foresees the hour when the deep waters of anguish should go over His soul. And for this cause came He into the world, that He might 'once suffer for sins, the just for the unjust.' In one sense, we know our Lord was come to give peace on earth. His birth was announced, as bringing the glad tidings of 'peace on earth, good will towards men.' But it was equally certain that the effect of His coming would be 'division.' This then should prevent us from ever setting up our rest in this world. It should teach us that our inheritance is elsewhere, and we should see at once the urgent necessity of a prompt and hearty repentance. May God deliver us from all our difficulties and trials! May He give us amidst dissension, peace; and amongst the lukewarm, zeal!

LUKE, xiii. 1-10.

THERE were present at that season some that told Him of the Galilæans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilæans were sinners above all the Galilæans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in

Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. He spake also this parable: A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: and if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down. And He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath.

WHO these Galilæans were, is uncertain. It may be inferred from the expressions, that Pilate surprised them as they were offering sacrifices, fell upon them suddenly and slew them. Our Saviour here instructs His hearers not to judge harshly of those who suffer by the common accidents and misfortunes of life, not to attribute their sudden end to any special transgressions of theirs, beyond the sinfulness of their fellow-creatures. For though all suffering be God's chastisement for sin, it is made, under the Gospel dispensation, a token of God's love to the afflicted. 'Whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth.' And this should serve to convince us of how little we should think of what we endure on earth, when compared with what we hope for in heaven. To make this more plain, Jesus sets forth the parable of the barren fig-tree, under which is represented the more usual dispensation of God's providence to mankind; His long-suffering and forbearance. Let it teach us then, not only to reverence and glorify the Divine mercy, but to imitate it by showing compassion and tenderness on every occasion to each other.

LUKE, xiii. 11-22.

AND, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself. And when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. And He laid His hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day. The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day? And when He had said these things, all His adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him. Then said He, Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I resemble it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it. And again He said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened. And He went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem.

A SORE disease was inflicted on this poor woman by the power of Satan for eighteen years. Her cure was wrought

by our Lord without any application from her. This shows how unjustly the ruler of the synagogue found fault with the people, as though they had pressed to be healed on the sabbath day. It signifies also how graciously God doth in Christ, bestow His gifts of grace, beyond what we desire, as well as beyond what we deserve. And here we should note under what circumstances the woman met with this unlooked-for mercy. She was keeping holy the sabbath day. Let us then take care that we observe this day, as it is enforced in the Gospel of Christ. Let His Gospel reign in our hearts, however slight may have been its influence at the first, and let it pervade at length each thought and feeling. Let it be to us as the seed that grew and waxed a great tree, and as the leaven that leavened the whole of the meal; a shelter in the storms of life, a secret vigour in the bonds of death. And let us endeavour to promote this happy influence of the Gospel as widely as we can throughout the world. We cannot too often call to mind, how greatly this depends upon ourselves. We cannot think too humbly of our own importance, or too highly of that Divine wisdom, which out of the very smallest seed, can raise so large a tree, and which, (by means of each particle of leaven, by each action of the least of Christ's disciples,) can leaven so many measures of meal, and can influence for good so many hearts of men.

LUKE, xiii. 23-35.

THEN said one unto Him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And He said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye

begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and He shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in Thy presence, and Thou hast taught in our streets. But He shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last. The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto Him, Get Thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill Thee. And He said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to day and to morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected. Nevertheless I must walk to day and to morrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

CHRIST here shows, that the number of those who may be saved is not defined by any decree of God: but that all may obtain salvation who display constancy, diligence, and courage, in conflicting with the world, the flesh, and the devil. He cautions us too, in His answer, against unnecessary curiosity about the salvation of others; but

teaches us to be careful in working out our own 'with fear and trembling,' that is with diligence and humility, not trusting to our own merits, but to God's mercy. When the Pharisees tried to alarm our Saviour by the mention of Herod, He expressed His resolution to work miracles notwithstanding Herod's cruelty and cunning. He desired them to tell that crafty and wicked prince, that He was employed in the business for which He was sent by God into the world, and when this was finished, and the time appointed by Divine wisdom had arrived, He would at last be perfected by suffering death. Let us also resolve to continue patient in well doing, however many be the perils that beset our success. Let us work not only to-morrow, but to-day, 'whilst it is called to-day.' Then shall we also be perfected; and blessed will that hour be, when we who through faith have loved, shall enter with Him into our heavenly inheritance.

LUKE, xiv. 1-11.

AND it came to pass, as He went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath day, that they watched Him. And, behold, there was a certain man before Him which had the dropsy. And Jesus answering spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day? And they held their peace. And He took him, and healed him, and let him go; and answered them, saying, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day? And they could not answer Him again to these things. And He put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when He marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto

them, When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; and he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. For whosoever exalted himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

FROM the circumstances in which our Saviour was now placed this difficulty arose, that either by forbearing to heal at that time, He would betray His fear, and strengthen their superstition as to ritual observances, or else by doing it, He must incur the censure of being a sabbath-breaker, and contemner of the law. But He who was well aware what spies He had upon Him, adopted so prudent an arrangement, that He accomplished His purpose, without giving any opening to his enemies to blame His conduct. Besides justifying His practice of doing good on the sabbath day, and healing the man afflicted with dropsy, our Lord designed also, in His visit to this Pharisee, to provide an antidote against pride, that dropsy of the soul, which ever thirsts the more painfully, the more freely it is indulged. And in the parable which He put forth, He here instructs us that we ought to exercise the greatest Christian humility, in whatever position God may place us. He tells us that no one should set their hearts on any earthly honours; we should look, in all things, rather to the praise of God; and by laying to heart our many sins, which we well know, and hoping of our brethren many good things we know not, we should each esteem others better than ourselves. For

‘whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased,’ and ‘whosoever humbleth himself shall be exalted.’ Give us then, O Lord, if our estate be high, the grace to think lowly of ourselves; and if our estate be low, may our hearts be still lower.

LUKE, xiv. 12-24.

THEN said He also to him that bade Him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just. And when one of them that sat at meat with Him heard these things, he said unto Him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God. Then said He unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: and sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is

done as Thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.

It is not to be supposed that Christ here forbids His disciples to invite their kinsfolk and friends to participate in mutual charity and friendship: He only forbids them to do so, from the prospect of a compensation, and instructs them to prefer the exercise of charity towards those from whom no recompense can be expected; and our Lord here compares the Gospel dispensation to a supper, as ministering true plenty and pleasure, all that men can want, and all that they can wish for, to render them perfectly happy. The first bidding denotes all the previous notices of the Messiah, by which the Law and the Prophets were intended to prepare the Jews for receiving Him and His doctrine. The second bidding seems to represent all that Jesus did, and taught, and suffered, for their conversion and salvation. The excuses sent for their absence, are those prejudices, and passions, and worldly interests, which hindered the Jews from believing. The guests brought in to supply their places, are the Gentile world, to whom after the Jews had thrust it from them, the subsequent tender of grace and salvation was made. But it is to be feared that it still is, and ever will be, the practice of the world to make excuses, for this is no more than what takes place daily in this Christian land. God invites us to His supper, and how many does He thus invite without success?

LUKE, xiv. 25-35.

AND there went great multitudes with Him: and He turned, and said unto them, If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

OUR Saviour's meaning is to be extended no further than to a readiness and willingness, whenever God shall call us to it, to quit all our temporal interests and enjoyments, and even life itself, the dearest of all things to us, and to submit to any temporal inconvenience and suffering for His sake. And by the similitudes here given, Christ cautioned those whom He addressed, seriously to weigh and consider matters beforehand, to form the most

steady resolutions of perseverance, and to arm themselves with fortitude and patience against persecution, that so they may not be induced to swerve from their Christian course. Thus may we ourselves be as salt, at once to season others, and to maintain our own purity. Thus may we escape the being counted like salt that has lost its savour, fit only to be cast out. May we so love our Lord, that compared with Him, we may hate all others. May we so hate what is evil, as to love what is good. May God help us to love both friends and enemies, even as Christ has loved us; in love to leave them when we ought, and when we may, in love also to return; in love to labour for their good, that good, the saving of the soul.

LUKE, xv. 1-10.

THEN drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. And He spake this parable unto them, saying, What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance. Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a

candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

It appears that the Pharisees and Scribes looked upon publicans as gross sinners and heathens, unfit to be conversed with, even if it were for the purpose of reforming them from their evil ways: but our Lord, on the contrary, proceeds to vindicate His conduct in this particular by two parables, the design of which is to show that the conversion of sinners is highly acceptable to God, and that, therefore, the embracing of every opportunity, for effecting this important purpose, ought not to be displeasing to men. As one is always more sensibly affected with joy on the recovery of any possession which had been lost, than in the continued enjoyment of what is incomparably more valuable, therefore the Scripture makes use of this comparison to give comfort and encouragement to sinners, who, however vile in their own eyes, may be sure of reconciliation and favour with God on true repentance. All of us, the best of us, have too much cause for repentance, for 'all we like sheep have gone astray:' but what an argument and encouragement to repentance is here held out, even to the greatest of sinners! May we then seek Him who thus seeks us; and may we be found of God through Christ, not having our own righteousness, but the righteousness which is of God, by faith!

LUKE, xv. 11-21.

AND He said, A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

THIS parable of the prodigal son is remarkably beautiful, even in the letter of it, from the variety of its incidents and the affecting manner in which they are related. Our Lord here veils the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven with a certain degree of present obscurity. The prodigal son represents not only a repenting individual, but the Gentile world converted and reconciled to

God. They had long strayed from their heavenly Father, and wasted what He had distributed to them; but at length they came to themselves, were humbled before Him, pardoned by Him, and restored to the same degree of favour as the elder brother, the Israelite. For a sense of sin is the beginning of repentance, and a sense of misery begets a sense of sin. Here let all sinners, and sinners we all are, behold the loving-kindness of our heavenly Father to those who truly repent and turn to Him, as it was displayed towards the Gentiles on their conversion. The bowels of His mercy yearned towards them in their lost estate, and He longed for their return as a father for that of his child gone from him. And never let us doubt, when we wish to reform, that God is more ready to hear than we to pray: more willing to forgive than we to repent.

LUKE, xv. 22-32.

BUT the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost and is found. And they began to be merry. Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him. And he answering said to his father, Lo,

these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: but as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

THOUGH no condition seemed too low for the deserts of the prodigal son in his own opinion, yet no kindness seemed too great for the expression of his father's love. In the same way is our heavenly Father ever ready to do more than we desire, as well as more than we deserve. So kindly does He both invite us to Himself, and when we come, turns our shame to glory, our mourning into joy and gladness. The anger of the elder son on finding his brother so well received, is a striking image, and an exact representation, of the perverse behaviour of the Jews, when the mystery of the calling of the Gentiles began to be revealed, and the Gospel to be preached to them. The father who rejoiced so greatly at the return of the prodigal, yet makes a wide difference between the penitent and the innocent son. Therefore the greater the obedience, the greater will be the reward with God. The penitent son will then find rest and peace to his soul, and receive his reward, but not a reward equal to that of the son who never departed from his father. Let us then take up the resolution of the holy Psalmist, 'I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.' Let us rejoice in the forgiveness of others, that thus we may ensure our own, and when by God's grace we repent, let us follow the example of the returning prodigal, so as to receive our reward, even reconciliation, and peace, and love, and joy, and rejoicing, in the house of our heavenly Father.

LUKE, xvi. 1-9.

AND He said also unto His disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And he called him and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward. Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed. I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore. And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.

WE have elsewhere a lesson of heavenly wisdom from the conduct of an unjust judge. We have here another from an unjust steward. He was not only called unjust, but his injustice was branded by his dismissal. A parable like this seemed to require an explanation, as many of the hearers might have drawn improper inferences from it; our Lord therefore did not leave it in obscurity, as

He did some other parables, but immediately pointed out Himself the uses and observations which were to be made from it. He told them to imitate the steward's *wisdom* in so managing the perishing possessions of this world, that they may secure to themselves a future subsistence when their present trust shall end. The steward was aware that his life was not to end with his stewardship, therefore, when that failed, some other means must be devised. Our case in this respect is the same as his. Death deprives us of all further use of our worldly advantages; but death itself does not close our existence. There is a future and eternal state, for which we are reserved; to this we must direct our aims. Our wealth must be spent in works of piety, charity, and public good; our talents and learning must be employed so as to promote the honour and service of God here below, and do good to our fellow-creatures, and thus we shall secure the prayers and blessings of those whom we oblige, and the favour and approbation of good angels in heaven, of the Holy Spirit, of Jesus Christ, and of the God and Father of all.

LUKE, xvi. 10-18.

HE that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. And the

Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided Him. And He said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God. The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it. And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail. Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.

THESE verses, occurring between two parables, are in some measure connected with both, and help to point them the more forcibly, against that love of riches which our Saviour here chiefly condemns. The moral of the whole chapter is this, that we should make a wise use of our present possessions with a view to our everlasting habitations. And it is plain that our Lord's principal intention in this whole discourse was, to warn men of the danger of that worldly-mindedness, of that heedlessness respecting matters of religion, of that total intentness on present pleasure and profit, which is not so much itself a particular vice as the foundation of all vices. It is this which makes men regardless of futurity, and without God in all their thoughts. It is this deceitfulness of riches and the care of other things—of ambition and voluptuousness—which, our Lord tells us in another parable, 'chokes the word;' that is, stifles all notions of religion, 'and it becomes unfruitful.' It may still command the respect of the multitude, conciliate the voice of flattery, and secure to its possessor, at his pleasure, all the goods that men can barter. But it is at the same time abomination in the sight of Him, who is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity.

LUKE, xvi. 19-31.

THERE was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: and there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot: neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

JESUS, having rebuked the Pharisees for their hypocrisy and covetousness, returns to His discourse concerning

the true use of riches, and the great evil of a worldly and voluptuous life, by describing in this parable the life and end of the rich man and Lazarus. We see how the former lived entirely to himself, never doing good to others; his heart was set on worldly objects, and he removed religion far from his thoughts. He was not censured by our Saviour, for enjoying what he had, but because he had no consideration for the wants and necessities of others. He took no notice of Lazarus who 'was laid at his gate;' such an object as would have moved any one's pity, a fellow creature reduced to extreme misery and necessity; and very little relief would have contented him. But all these things, whether enjoyment or misery, last only here with our life, and how short is that! The rich man, no doubt, thought himself a much happier one than poor Lazarus at his door; and yet, after a very little while, how glad would he have been to change places with this poor man when he was in torments! then, no doubt he wished that he had suffered all the misery and want in this world which Lazarus did, provided he might have been comforted as he was, and 'carried by angels into Abraham's bosom. How great then is the responsibility of being rich! How grievous is the end of receiving good things, without doing good works! How much better is it here to receive evil things, and so to live as to receive good hereafter!

LUKE, xvii. 1-10.

THEN said He unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come! It were better for him that a milstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones. Take heed

to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him. And the Apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith. And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you. But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? and will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.

LET us never be disheartened at the sight of evil all around us. Christ has told us beforehand that it was sure to come. Only let us take heed that we help not to promote it, and let us never tempt others to sin. Far be it from us, by any word or deed of ours, to make a brother to offend. And rather than make him fall, it were better for us to be cast, with a millstone about our necks, into the depth of the sea. For we have need all of us to mend, to be convinced of our own sinfulness; to be persuaded of God's readiness to pardon; and to remember that if we forgive not men their trespasses, neither will He forgive us ours. We find the apostles frequently confessing their weakness and their want of faith; by which they mean, not want of faith to believe any article of religion, but want of a due reliance on the power of God to enable them to perform miracles for the

great work of converting men to the Christian religion. While we freely confess that our very best services are unprofitable with regard to God, we should study by all means, to render them as profitable as we can to our neighbours and to ourselves. Thus we shall act the consistent, the pious, the charitable, the Christian part; thus we shall render to all their dues; humility to God the Father, gratitude and love to His Eternal Son, our only Redeemer, and obedience to the dictates and suggestions of the Holy Spirit, our Sanctifier and Comforter.

LUKE, xvii. 11–19.

AND it came to pass, as He went to Jerusalem, that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. And as He entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: and they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when He saw them, He said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God. And fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. And He said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.

WE should well reflect on the conduct of the persons on whom this signal benefit was conferred. Their complaint was common as well as their calamity; but they, who were

unanimously loud in their request, and seemed equally sensible of their affliction, were far from being equally affected by their deliverance. Nine out of the ten no sooner received the mercy than they forgot it; and only one poor Samaritan out of the number had the grace to come back, and with becoming humility and zeal, to pay the acknowledgment due for so sudden, so signal a mercy. This passage is the very picture of mankind, and holds out to us a glass, in which almost every soul may see its own disposition but too exactly represented, too strongly reflected. How closely do the generality of the world resemble those lepers; extremely importunate in their complaints, impatient of sorrow and distress; and when those cries for ease and deliverance have prevailed, they are equally hardened and ungrateful! How often do we when in trouble pour out our hearts before God, promising that if He would vouchsafe the blessing, or pardon the sin which wounded our hearts, we would never forget the great mercy! And yet how suddenly do His gracious condescensions and our most solemn vows slip out of our minds! All of us express our astonishment at the ingratitude of these lepers. But we must be conscious that they might each say to us, as Nathan did to David, 'Thou art the man!' nay, thou art worse, for thou hast received numberless and most signal proofs of the Divine goodness, and no day passes without refreshing thy memory with new demonstrations of it.

LUKE, xvii. 20-37.

AND when He was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, He answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there!

for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you. And He said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it. And they shall say to you, See here; or, See there: go not after them, nor follow them. For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in His day. But first must He suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation. And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot's wife. Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it. I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. And they answered and said unto Him, Where, Lord? And He said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.

As the Pharisees were anxious to know when the kingdom of God was to come, our Saviour told them that it

would not come with outward marks of splendour and triumph, but was of a moral and spiritual nature, ruling over the affections of the soul to reform, and purify them. It was therefore in their hearts and lives that they were to look for it, where, by Christ's preaching, it ought long since to have been established. This then is the true kingdom of God first to be established, this the revelation first to take place within, ere we shall see with joy the great change, of new heavens and a new earth, at the second coming of Christ. Of the kingdom of heaven, in this latter sense, we are not now to reckon with any certainty as to when it will take place. Come when it will, it will come suddenly, it will come when we are apt to reckon it will not. It will come as the lightning, which flashes in one moment over the sky; from which no screen can hide us, and which darkness only makes more bright. 'So shall also the Son of man be in His day.' Let us then daily expect the coming of our Lord. In all things let us engage as we should do if we daily expected Him. We must be warned by the example of Lot's wife, not so much as to look back on this world's goods, but counting all things as loss for Christ, to flee through Him, for refuge to the mercy of God.

LUKE, xviii. 1-8.

AND He spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: and there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God,

nor regard man; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?

WE are not to suppose that mere importunity can prevail with God, to give us those things which He is otherwise unwilling to grant; but that it becomes us to be earnest and fervent, to testify our faith and confidence in His goodness, and the deep sense which we have of our own weakness, wants, and unworthiness; also to show that we set a true value on His blessings and favours, as worthy of all the earnestness and importunity we can use; and in this decent and sober sense, the success of our prayers may be truly said to depend on our importunity, not that God is always to be moved to grant our requests, but that it becomes us to have these dispositions in order that we may be more fitly qualified for the grace and mercy which God is willing to bestow upon us. And to enforce this duty our Lord describes an unjust judge, who for a time refused to do justice to a forlorn suitor, but was overcome by her perseverance in asking him. Therefore let us not forget that if we ask, it shall be given us; if we seek, we shall at length be sure to find; if we knock, it shall without fail be opened unto us. And when our Lord thus exhorts us to pray, and not to faint, let us remember that He is ever more willing to hear than we to pray; that although He bear with us and keep us waiting (what we reckon a long time), yet speedily, as God reckons speed, speedily, as He knows it to be for their good, He will avenge His own elect.

LUKE, xviii. 9-17.

AND He spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. And they brought unto Him also infants, that He would touch them: but when His disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them unto Him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein.

HERE we have humility most forcibly recommended, both by an affecting parable and by a significant action. In the parable our Lord has so described the pride of the Pharisee, that it cannot fail to be odious in our sight, whilst the lowly contrition of the publican is made to be as admirable before man, as it is declared to be acceptable unto God. The true instruction to be derived from this is, that however men may mistake themselves or one another, God always has respect unto the lowly, but beholds the proud afar off; that no past offences, however

inveterate and habitual, will shut out from His pardon any sinner who humbly bewails and heartily forsakes them : and that the proper method of the sinner's applying for mercy and grace, (and all of us are sinners) is, not arrogantly to thank God that we are not as other men are, but, as our Church has directed us, meekly to acknowledge our vileness, and truly to repent us of our faults. A holy life, though it be the only sure sign of faith, and therefore the only safe ground of hope, is no meritorious cause of salvation. It is not the thing we are to trust in. He that should do all, would be still but an unprofitable servant. And they who have done most, must be careful to remember that they have no claim of right, except through the merits of Jesus Christ ; they must receive the kingdom of God as little children, or they will in no wise enter therein.

LUKE, xviii. 18-30.

AND a certain ruler asked Him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life ? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good ? none is good, save one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother. And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up. Now when Jesus heard these things, He said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing : sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven : and come, follow me. And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful : for he was very rich. And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, He said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of

God! For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And they that heard it said, Who then can be saved? And He said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God. Then Peter said, Lo, we have left all, and followed Thee. And He said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.

THE question made by this ruler is one which we ought daily to be putting to our Lord, as we study His revealed word: 'Good master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' The answer we may interpret as follows. Why callest thou me good? Is it as believing me to be that one only being to whom this name belongs? If so, follow up thy profession by corresponding practice. Fulfil those commandments which thou knowest to come of God. Take those which thou knowest in the Old Testament. Obey them, not in the letter only, but in the spirit, devoting thyself and thy whole substance to the service of Christ. See how near these two things, sorrow and riches, are to each other! The last what we so greatly covet: the first what we so diligently avoid. Yet the ruler, being rich, might have been glad to think he had at his disposal the means required. The more he was rich, the more he should have rejoiced to become poor for the kingdom of heaven's sake. But this is not the way in which we view these things by nature. Hence it is so difficult for them that have riches to enter into the kingdom of God. We must be ever ready to give up all we have, 'house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake.' We must not so love them as not to love,

far more than them, that Lord who has vouchsafed to call us 'friends;' who is described as 'the first born among many brethren,' and as the Spouse of His spouse, the Church.

LUKE, xviii. 31-43.

THEN He took unto Him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: and they shall scourge Him, and put Him to death: and the third day He shall rise again. And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken. And it came to pass, that as He was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way side begging: and hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant. And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. And he cried, saying, Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me. And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried so much the more, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto Him: and when he was come near, He asked him, saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Him, glorifying God: and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God.

How forward is our Lord to speak to His disciples of the things which He should suffer at Jerusalem! How welcome unto Him was the fulfilment of this His Father's will! How cheerfully ought we too, to look forward to the change we must undergo in death; nay, to the sufferings which we shall probably then endure! Are they not our Father's will? Is not this the way in which it seemed good to Him to make perfect the Captain of our salvation? Shall we not rejoice to think, when our time shall come, that we are going where He has gone before, and by the same way He went? Thus, then, let us think, thus speak of death; as knowing that we also shall rise again. And though the world understand not our saying, we shall have spoken what it is profitable for the world to hear. In the miracle which follows, we must first adore the divine power of Him who could make the blind to see. We may next apply it to our own spiritual infirmity of sight, and hence learn by what means it may be effectually removed. The blindness of this poor man must have rendered him unable to understand how Christ could make him see, or even what sight truly meant. Yet he was clearly aware that Christ could convey to him a great blessing; in a word, could 'have mercy' on him. Thus we also may believe in the power of God's grace, in the influence of His Spirit on our souls, and on our redemption unto life through Christ. These things we may understand enough of, for us to believe in them heartily, to pray for them fervently, and to attain unto them thankfully.

LUKE, xix. 1-10.

AND Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. And, behold, there was a man named Zacchæus, which

was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who He was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him: for He was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchæus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received Him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That He was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner. And Zacchæus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forso-much as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

By the great joy and eagerness which Zaccheus displayed, he showed what high esteem he had for that holy Jesus, whom the Scribes and Pharisees despised. That he was little in stature signifies how slight is the importance of outward advantages, compared with the disposition of the inner man. What he wanted in height, he could make up for by activity in climbing up the tree. There he could both see, and be seen of Jesus. And from thence he was invited to come down, to receive the Lord in his house. Zacchæus shows the sincerity of his reformation and conversion by devoting so large a portion of his possessions to charitable purposes, and by his readiness to repair any injury he may have done to others by oppression or false accusation. And this was not the empty boast of the past, or the vain intention for the future, but the action of the hour then present, the expression of his repentance and amendment of life through

faith in Jesus Christ. Therefore he is assured by our Lord that this day is his family received into the gracious covenant of mercy and salvation, and to a share in all the promises made by God to His peculiar people. Help us, Lord, to give largely of that which is our own! and that which is not ours teach us to restore!

LUKE, xix. 11-27.

AND as they heard these things, He added and spake a parable, because He was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities. And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: for I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant.

Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow : wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury ? And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given ; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.

BEING now not far from Jerusalem, the royal city of the Jews, our Lord's disciples thought that He would immediately take upon Him the regal authority. He therefore spake this parable, on purpose to show them, that His kingdom was 'not of this world ;' that it was not here that they should share His reign ; but that they must wait, and work with patience, till the time of His return from heaven. The nobleman here mentioned represents Christ the Son of God, who, leaving heaven, travels 'to a far country,' this world, in order to receive a spiritual kingdom from His Father ; and then, after His resurrection, to return to heaven. The 'ten servants' among whom He distributed the sum of money to be put out to interest against His return, represent the apostles and preachers of the Gospel. 'His citizens who hated Him,' and rejected Him for their King, are the Jewish and other apostate nations. On His second appearance in glory He will reward or punish His servants according to their deserts, and will destroy His enemies, in the same manner as He intimates He will destroy the rebellious nation of the Jews, who opposed His Gospel and the establishment of His kingdom. Thus Christ to those who improve His

gifts, does in this present time add continually more and more assistance, and will finally reward them with eternal life, but to those who improve not His grace, He in this present time withdraws even what He had already given, and to them there will be hereafter no joy, only condemnation.

LUKE, xix. 28-40.

AND when He had thus spoken, He went before, ascending up to Jerusalem. And it came to pass, when He was come nigh to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount called the mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples, saying, Go ye into the village over against you ; in the which at your entering ye shall find a colt tied, whereon yet neverman sat: loose him, and bring him hither. And if any man ask you, Why do ye loose him? thus shall ye say unto him, Because the Lord hath need of him. And they that were sent went their way, and found even as He had said unto them. And as they were loosing the colt, the owners thereof said unto them, Why loose ye the colt? And they said, The Lord hath need of him. And they brought him to Jesus: and they cast their garments upon the colt, and they set Jesus thereon. And as He went, they spread their clothes in the way. And when He was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen ; saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest. And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto Him, Master, rebuke Thy disciples. And He answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.

THE last words of this passage may greatly help to explain the meaning of the whole transaction. It was a public testimony to Jesus as the Messiah, forced by a miracle from the multitude, whilst they were ignorant of His real kingdom. The disciples indeed cried, 'Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord.' But they had as yet no notion of the great end of our Lord's coming, of the great blessing He was to bring upon the world. They proclaimed 'peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.' But they were all the while expecting Him to assume a visible throne on earth. The words therefore which they uttered, were overruled by that Almighty Power which could with equal ease have made the stones 'immediately cry out.' He it is who must also move our stony hearts to praise our Lord and Saviour. Not by our own strength can we offer the sacrifices of thanksgiving and prayer. Not without God, can we feel what to God we owe, nor can we give what to God is due. Let us then by faith and holiness, devote to our Lord's service all that we have, all that we are. Let us with our lips and by our lives confess Him before men, that He may confess us before our Father which is in heaven. Not like the stones which feel not; not like the disciples who understood not; but with heart and mind let us declare in the fulness of our conviction, 'Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord.'

LUKE, xix. 41-48.

AND when He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine

eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation. And He went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought; saying unto them, It is written, My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves. And He taught daily in the temple. But the chief priests and the scribes and the chief of the people sought to destroy Him, and could not find what they might do: for all the people were very attentive to hear Him.

It is thrice recorded of our blessed Saviour that He wept: on this occasion, of His prophetic foresight of the destruction impending over Jerusalem; at the death of Lazarus; and once again when His own sufferings were the cause. Let us then observe His tears, let us hear His words of bitter regret, 'If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!' Such are the tears our Saviour sheds for souls that perish! Such is His tender love, His anxious desire to save, and His concern for them that are lost. It is related by Josephus, that this prophecy of our Saviour was very remarkably fulfilled at the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. Titus, the Roman commander, in order to reduce the city the sooner, surrounded it with a trench and rampart of thirty-nine furlongs in length, and with thirteen castles or forts, for the purpose of preventing the escape of the inhabitants. The utmost distress and misery arose from the famine which ensued. And the days came upon that city, when their enemies laid it even with the ground. Shall it be said that this was the work

of man, and that though man may destroy, Christ can only save? Nay; we know that this destruction of Jerusalem is spoken of in Scripture as the visitation of Christ Himself. We know that it signifies with what certainty He will come in like manner, at the end of the world, to judge the quick and the dead. Let none then be led by hope of mercy to continue in transgression. No one thing is more certain than that Jesus is the Son of God. By that Gospel we shall be judged in the last day. Not according to our notions of goodness: but according to that goodness, which, whilst it pities the sinner, is for ever at enmity with sin.

LUKE, xx. 1-18.

AND it came to pass, that on one of those days, as He taught the people in the temple, and preached the Gospel, the chief priests and the scribes came upon Him with the elders, and spake unto Him, saying, Tell us, by what authority doest Thou these things? or who is He that gave Thee this authority? And He answered and said unto them, I will also ask you one thing; and answer me: The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; He will say, Why then believed ye him not? But and if we say, Of men; all the people will stone us: for they be persuaded that John was a prophet. And they answered, that they could not tell whence it was. And Jesus said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things. Then began He to speak to the people this parable; A certain man planted a vineyard, and let it forth to husbandmen, and went into a far country for a

long time. And at the season he sent a servant to the husbandmen, that they should give him of the fruit of the vineyard: but the husbandmen beat him, and sent him away empty. And again he sent another servant: and they beat him also, and entreated him shamefully, and sent him away empty. And again he sent a third: and they wounded him also, and cast him out. Then said the lord of the vineyard, What shall I do? I will send my beloved son: it may be they will reverence him when they see him. But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be our's. So they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him. What therefore shall the lord of the vineyard do unto them? He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others. And when they heard it, they said, God forbid. And He beheld them, and said, What is this then that is written, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner? Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

THE Jewish rulers, having first resolved against unbelief, next demand of our Lord His authority. Thus they also, who set at nought Christ's ministers, are apt to question the validity of their office. If we really believe, then may we answer our Saviour's question without risk or shame, that Christ and His Gospel are from heaven. But if we feel that the tenour of our lives is as far from faith as darkness is from light, who must not fear, lest, in owning Jesus for the Christ, he exposes himself to the question, 'Why then believed ye Him not? In the parable that follows, the Jews readily understood that it was directed against themselves. Their

nation was the vineyard planted by the Almighty. Their prophets were the servants whom He had commissioned to receive the appointed fruits,—obedience and holiness in His people. When they had cast out these, He at length sent unto them His Son. So much the more intent were the wicked husbandmen to put to death this last Messenger of the covenant. Therefore there was a fearful sentence denounced against them. The practical use which we are to make of this punishment, is to consider it as a warning to ourselves. God's vineyard is now given unto us. Of us does He require holiness and love, as the appropriate fruits of faith. Let us see, then, that above all we reverence the Son. Let us pray against sin, that we do it not, as well as against punishment, that we suffer it not; and make us to love that which God commands, and to hate that which He forbids!

LUKE, xx. 19–26.

AND the chief priests and the scribes the same hour sought to lay hands on Him; and they feared the people: for they perceived that He had spoken this parable against them. And they watched Him, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of His words, that so they might deliver Him unto the power and authority of the governor. And they asked Him, saying, Master, we know that Thou sayest and teachest rightly, neither acceptest Thou the person of any, but teachest the way of God truly: is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Cæsar, or no? But He perceived their craftiness, and said unto them, Why tempt ye me? Shew me a penny. Whose image and super-

scription hath it? They answered and said, Cæsar's. And He said unto them, Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which be Cæsar's, and unto God the things which be God's. And they could not take hold of His words before the people: and they marvelled at His answer, and held their peace.

WE see here the common end of worldly cunning. These spies, who were sent on purpose to entrap our Saviour, are caught in their own snare. The question they put to Christ respecting the payment of tribute to Cæsar, was asked in the hope that He would deny the lawfulness of it, and so furnish a ground of accusation against Him, as an enemy to Cæsar. Christ easily confuted their questions, by the image and superscription of the money about which they inquired. This showed them that they were wrong to raise any question at all about the lawfulness of giving tribute to Cæsar; and His words should serve to remind us that, not only should we offer our tribute, our allegiance, and our prayers, to the government under which we live, but that, bearing as we do in us the image and superscription of Christ, we are bound to render unto Him ourselves, our souls and bodies, as a tribute which is His just due. Let us render then unto Christ the things which are His. Let us render unto Christ ourselves. God is the judge of all the earth, and the fountain of mercy. He makes war and makes peace: He declares Himself to be ever at enmity with sin, and yet at all times ready to be reconciled to sinners, through the mediation of His blessed Son.

LUKE, xx. 27-38.

THEN came to Him certain of the Sadducees, which deny that there is any resurrection; and they asked Him, saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If any man's brother die, having a wife, and he die without children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. There were therefore seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and died without children. And the second took her to wife, and he died childless. And the third took her; and in like manner the seven also: and they left no children, and died. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife of them is she? for seven had her to wife. And Jesus answering said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: but they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection. Now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For He is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto Him.

OUR blessed Lord corrects the mistake which the Sadducees made in judging of the life to come by the life that now is, when the circumstances would be widely different. In this world, where mankind go off and die daily, there is a necessity of a constant and regular succession to supply the decays of mortality: but, in the world to come, where none die any more, there is no necessity for such supplies. They will no longer be subject to the changes

and accidents of this mortal state; but they will all be like the angels of God, glorious, unchangeable, and immortal; and they will continue in the presence of God, in a state of perfect bliss, and in the eternal enjoyment of unalterable happiness. The highest angels in heaven are God's ministers and messengers, and are glorious and happy in their obedience: and the very meanest of the sons of men, if not wanting in the duties of their present station, whatever it be, will be advanced to the same likeness. The lowest offices in God's service become the steps of our highest advancement. Good men are now the children of God, because they resemble Him in the holy disposition of their minds; but they will be like Him in the participation of His happiness, so far as finite and created beings are capable; the whole man, body as well as soul, will be a partaker of immortality. Never may we think of the resurrection of the dead, as of any earthly joys, however excellent! Let us set heavenly love in our imagination, above all that we can now experience, and we shall then be likely to seek it with the most lively and effectual zeal.

LUKE, xx. 39-47.

THEN certain of the scribes answering said, Master, Thou hast well said. And after that they durst not ask Him any question at all. And He said unto them, How say they that Christ is David's son? And David himself saith in the book of Psalms, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit Thou on my right hand, till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool. David therefore calleth Him Lord, how is He then his son? Then in the audience of all the people He said unto His disciples, Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in

the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts; which devour widows' houses, and for a show make long prayers: the same shall receive greater damnation.

WHEN the Scribes found that the Sadducees were put to silence, they acknowledged to Jesus, 'Master, Thou hast well said.' We might expect, therefore, that they became converts to His doctrine. But far from it; they merely refrained from any further questions. They were afraid to do so, because they felt that each question would convict them more deeply of sin for not believing unto repentance. Let us never be stayed by the fear of thus losing in His behalf the indulgences we love. But rather, wherever we most suspect ourselves to be wrong, there let us the more endeavour to become right. In the charges which follow against the Scribes, we see the reason of their reluctance to enquire and believe. They were not likely to desire to know the truth when their hearts were set on the wearing of robes, and 'greetings in the markets.' Beware then of the Scribes; not of their sins only, but of themselves! Beware of such as do what the Scribes did. Beware, for remember how awful is their sentence; 'the same shall receive the greater damnation.' Lord, be Thou ever at our right hand to make all our enemies our footstool; to subdue our pride and covetousness, and to set us above the world, the flesh, and the devil!

LUKE, xxi. 1-8.

AND He looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. And He saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. And

He said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: for all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had. And as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, He said, As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. And they asked Him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be? and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass? And He said, Take heed that ye be not deceived; for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them.

THE praise bestowed on this widow by our Lord enforces a doctrine which we cannot too often call to mind; that our actions under the Gospel are estimated according to our means and motives. Christ pronounced expressly that 'this poor widow hath cast in more than they all.' And He adds the reason, that she of her penury had 'cast in all the living that she had.' The treasury, into which these offerings were cast, was for the use and repair of the temple. But whilst His disciples admired the building and its contents, the stones in its walls, and the gifts within, our Lord began to warn them that it was soon to be destroyed. From this we learn how little the amount of the gifts could signify, compared with the motive from which they were bestowed. Let us then, in all we do, make our main end the honour of our Lord. Let us plan, let us labour, let us give, with a view always to the crown of glory. Then, though we can give but little, we may be counted to give more than they all, more than all who give for earthly ends; and though the work of our hands here perish, we shall rejoice in the fruit of it for ever.

LUKE, xxi. 9-24.

BUT when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass, but the end is not by and by. Then said He unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights, and great signs shall there be from heaven. But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. And it shall turn to you for a testimony. Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist. And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. But there shall not an hair of your head perish. In your patience possess ye your souls. And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judæa flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

JOSEPHUS has given a very particular account of the wonders which preceded the destruction of Jerusalem, which coincides with this prophecy. Among other things, he speaks of a flaming sword seen over the city ; also of a light which for the space of half an hour shone so bright in the night about the altar and the temple, that it seemed as if it was noonday. Although the disciples were warned that they would be delivered up to synagogues and to prisons for Christ's sake, yet were they assured that God will turn all this to their advantage and to His own glory. For, by these means, their innocence and sincerity, and the malice of their enemies, would be made manifest ; the doctrine of the Gospel would be more enquired into, and more effectually published to the world, and the truth of it more firmly established. They were also told that, notwithstanding their persecutions and trials, not a hair of their head should perish : for, if it be the good pleasure of God, He can preserve us in the most imminent danger, from even the smallest hurt. We must then persevere with constancy, and this will furnish the most certain means of our escaping from the general destruction, and whilst we are never terrified by that which it is sin to fear, we must never fail to fear that which it is sin to do.

LUKE, xxi. 25–38.

AND there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars ; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity ; the sea and the waves roaring ; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth : for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and

great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh. And He spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; when they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away. And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man. And in the day time He was teaching in the temple; and at night He went out, and abode in the mount that is called the mount of Olives. And all the people came early in the morning to Him in the temple, for to hear Him.

AT the conclusion of this prophecy our attention is more entirely directed to that day, when God 'will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained.' The sun, the moon, and the stars are all figurative expressions, signifying primarily the destruction of the Jewish state; but they are also a type of our Lord's future coming to final judgment. When, therefore, the disciples saw Jerusalem destroyed, when we are assured of its having been destroyed exactly in the manner here foretold, we may thence of a certainty know that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. By 'nigh at hand' our Saviour does not so much mean near in point of time,

as close to us in point of reality. Let us take heed then to ourselves, for 'as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.' By soberness and temperance, by charity, devotion, and faith, let us take heed that, however unawares it come, it may find us always ready. Let us watch always, and pray always: always be on our guard against sin, always have our hearts both aware that God is present to help, and let us ever lean on His help for safety. That so we may be accounted worthy to escape 'all these things that shall come to pass;' worthy not for our own sakes, but for the sake of Jesus Christ, and worthy through that righteousness which is by faith in Him.

LUKE, xxii. 1-13.

NOW the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover. And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill Him; for they feared the people. Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve. And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray Him unto them. And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money. And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray Him unto them in the absence of the multitude. Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed. And He sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat. And they said unto Him, Where wilt Thou that we prepare? And He said unto them, Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him

into the house where he entereth in. And ye shall say unto the goodman of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guest chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? And he shall shew you a large upper room furnished: there make ready. And they went, and found as He had said unto them: and they made ready the passover.

It was for money that Judas covenanted to betray his Lord. It was for money that Christ was sold. May we never be tempted to be covetous, and make such sad use of what we have, and let us beware lest we also sell our Lord for silver. It is added of Judas Iscariot, that 'he was of the number of the twelve.' This should remind us, that Christ's ministers, like ourselves, cannot be perfect, and that we must ever look up to Him as our only true minister and priest, our one only shepherd and bishop of our souls. We shall then be less disheartened to find in those whom He has appointed to assist us, imperfection and sin, when we are sure of all truth, all strength, all virtue, all grace in Him. Our Lord made every preparation as usual for the passover, though He knew that He Himself was, as the apostle calls Him, 'our Passover.' He was the very 'Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,' to save us from the death eternal, due to every one of us for our sins. Let us then daily trim our lamps, that we may be ready to meet the bridegroom, in case He should this very hour return to judgment. And may we serve God, and God only; and love and serve Him, as He is revealed to our faith in Jesus Christ our Lord.

LUKE, xxii. 14-23.

AND when the hour was come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him. And He said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer : for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves : for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come. And He took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you : this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you. But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table. And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined : but woe unto that man by whom He is betrayed ! And they began to enquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing.

THE commemoration of Christ's death, as the ground of our hope of everlasting life, cannot but suggest to our minds a lively sense of Christ's love to mankind, and our obligation of mutual kindness to each other. We are all called upon jointly to commemorate the love of Christ, as the servants of one Master and the members of one body. Men commonly observe religiously the charge of a dying friend ; and unless it is very unreasonable and impossible they pay to it implicit obedience. But this is the charge of our best friend, nay, of the greatest benefactor and friend of all mankind, when He was preparing to die in our stead, and to offer up Himself a sacrifice for us. Can

we then deny anything to Him who has done so much for us? Can we refuse to comply with this His dying command, so little grievous and burdensome in itself, so infinitely beneficial to us. Let us consider how great was His love in this ordinance, how pressing His invitation, how earnest His desire, that we should with Himself partake of it. Then let us ask ourselves what thing can we do worse, what sin can we commit greater, than never to go nigh unto that table at all. The death of Christ was not merely a proof of His love to mankind, it was also an expiatory sacrifice for the sins of the whole world; and therefore the Lord's supper, which commemorates that sacrifice, may justly be called, 'a sacrament of our redemption.'

LUKE, xxii. 24-34.

AND there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. And He said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth. Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou

art converted, strengthen thy brethren. And he said unto Him, Lord, I am ready to go with Thee, both into prison, and to death. And He said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.

WHEN the twelve apostles thus unseasonably contended for superiority on the night of the paschal supper, our Lord showed the greatest kindness in His manner of correcting their false ideas. Take example, He said, from me. Ye see how far I, who am your Lord and Master, am from assuming to myself any worldly power or greatness, and that I even behave myself as your inferior in the offices of condescension and service. Learn, therefore, in imitation of me, to assist one another, and condescend to one another with all humility, meekness, and charity. By recalling to their minds the trials they had gone through with Him, and by pointing out to them their reward, Jesus designs further to check their vain ambition, and their fondness for worldly advantages and honours. God gave to Jesus a name above every name, so that none could approach to His degree of exaltation. But as He exalted the Son for His voluntary humiliation and sufferings, so He decreed that all who suffered with Him should also reign with Him: that they should partake of His glories who had partaken of His hardships; and that they should receive an exaltation equal to what they had done for His sake. Let us, then, meet our difficulties by adhering steadfastly to Him, and by an increase of goodwill amongst each other. And the more we are distressed from without, the more shall we be at peace within. Pray for us, Lord, and teach us to pray for ourselves. Teach us to pray with the firm assurance that through Thee we shall be heard, and that we shall have grace to stand in the hour of temptation.

LUKE, xxii. 35-46.

AND He said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything? And they said, Nothing. Then said He unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one. For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And He was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end. And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And He said unto them, It is enough. And He came out, and went, as He was wont, to the mount of Olives; and His disciples also followed Him. And when He was at the place, He said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation. And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, saying, Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but Thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him. And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. And when He rose up from prayer, and was come to His disciples, He found them sleeping for sorrow, and said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.

JESUS warns His disciples that the time of danger and distress was now approaching, and that due care must prudently be taken to provide against it. As they understood their Master to mean literally that they should arm themselves for their defence, they said to Him, 'Here are two swords.' But Jesus, who really meant only to signify to

them the greatness of their approaching distress and temptations, and to warn them against surprise, replied, 'It is enough;' ye need not trouble yourselves for any more weapons of this nature for your defence. But as soldiers are ever watchful at their post, so should Christians take to themselves the 'shield of faith' and 'the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God,' and go forth at all risk, to be made, like the great Captain of their salvation, 'perfect through sufferings.' And like Jesus we must watch and pray. See how He prayed! Behold His agony of pain! What was it, what could it be, that lay thus heavy on the soul of the Saviour of the world? Was it the fear of death? was it the pain, shame, and torment, felt beforehand, of His ensuing crucifixion? No, it was the sad weight of the sins of mankind, it was the heavy burden of His Father's wrath for those sins, which thus pressed down His soul, and wrung from Him these bitter expressions of sorrow. If every human sin deserve eternal death, what was it for His soul, in this short time of His bitter passion, to answer those millions of eternal deaths, which all the sins of all mankind had deserved?

LUKE, xxii. 47-62.

AND while He yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss Him. But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss? When they which were about Him saw what would follow, they said unto Him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword? And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear. And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And He touched

his ear, and healed him. Then Jesus said unto the chief priest, and captains of the temple, and the elders, which were come to Him, Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves? When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness. Then took they Him, and led Him, and brought Him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off. And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them. But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with Him. And he denied Him, saying, Woman, I know Him not. And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with Him: for he is a Galilæan. And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.

AND while Jesus yet spake, the multitude were approaching to take Him by force. And Judas came and betrayed Him with a kiss. What base and ungrateful conduct! But our Lord bestowed on him no upbraiding appellation; He simply declared His knowledge, that this seeming token of affection was used for the purpose of marking Him out to those whom His relentless enemies sent to apprehend Him. We learn from St. John that it was St. Peter who, in his zeal, was anxious to use the sword in the defence of his Master. It was St. Peter who so soon afterwards, in spite of all his resolution, was guilty of thrice denying

Christ in public. From this let us learn how close is the connexion between presumptuous confidence and shameful frailty. Let us call to mind, for our own greater warning, the declaration of Solomon, that 'pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.' In the fall of Peter, we see what comes of evil company. The apostle had sat down amongst the enemies of his Lord. Let us avoid the conversation of them that know not Christ, if we would not ourselves be tempted to deny Him. And let us take warning against denying our Lord once, lest we be led on to deny Him thrice. Be thou nigh, O Lord, to look upon us with love, and we may yet hope to be forgiven. Never may we henceforth fail to mourn for sin; never fail to love in return for pardon.

LUKE, xxii. 63-71.

AND the men that held Jesus mocked Him, and smote Him. And when they had blindfolded Him, they struck Him on the face, and asked Him, saying, Prophecy, who is it that smote Thee? And many other things blasphemously spake they against Him. And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together, and led Him into their council, saying, Art Thou the Christ? tell us. And He said unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe: and if I also ask you, ye will not answer me, nor let me go. Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God. Then said they all, Art Thou then the Son of God? And He said unto them, Ye say that I am. And they said, What need we any further witness? for we ourselves have heard of His own mouth.

IT was a chief part of our Lord's humiliation to be mocked and spoken against blasphemously. Words of contempt are often more hurtful to the feelings than acts of injury. Let us learn from this divine example to bear with patience even these most trying of all affronts. What can be said to us more offensive, than for them that held Jesus to bid Him prophesy who it was that smote Him? What is this but mocking at His words? Yet, there are many who now own Him for the blessed Son, but profanely take His name in vain, and make light of His commandments. And there are some who still deny Him to be the Son of God. May we not thus be led astray; but let us lay the ground of our trust in this rock of our salvation. Let us love Him as our Redeemer, whilst we praise Him and pray to Him as our God. Help us to have a lively faith in the atonement of His death! Teach us to love that which He commands, and to desire that which He has promised! Guide us to follow Him, in all lowliness, patience, and long-suffering; and in the end let us enter into that blessed inheritance, there to reign with Him where He is, on the right hand of the power of God.

LUKE, xxiii. 1-12.

AND the whole multitude of them arose, and led Him unto Pilate. And they began to accuse Him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that He Himself is Christ a King. And Pilate asked Him, saying, Art Thou the King of the Jews? And He answered him and said, Thou sayest it. Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man. And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the

people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place. When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilæan. And as soon as he knew that He belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time. And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see Him of a long season, because he had heard many things of Him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by Him. Then he questioned with Him in many words; but He answered him nothing. And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him. And Herod with his men of war set Him at nought, and mocked Him, and arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him again to Pilate. And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves.

It seems probable that the priests, elders, scribes, and captains of the temple, with their servants and dependants, made up the multitude here spoken of. The common people were for the most part favourers of Jesus, and for this reason the Jewish rulers caused Him to be seized in the night, and 'in the absence of the multitude.' Notwithstanding our Lord's acknowledging that He was a King, Pilate could find no fault in Him. Pilate, therefore, being aware of our Lord's innocency, ought at once to have set Him free. But though he appears to have been unwilling to do wrong, he was much more afraid to do that which was right. It is not enough to be afraid of doing evil; we must also love to do good. It was from a sinful fear that Pilate sent Christ to Herod. It was with a sinful joy that Herod received Him. And the very day on which Herod sent back Christ to Pilate, 'they were made friends together.' And what a friendship have we here described—a friendship that was

enmity with God. Never, Lord, may we make friends with Thine enemies. Rather let us choose for our companions those whom we may believe that Thou hast chosen; those whom, from their piety and zeal, we may suppose to have been appointed through Thy merits to the fellowship of saints and angels.

LUKE, xxiii. 13–26.

AND Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and behold, I, having examined Him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse Him: no, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto Him. I will therefore chastise Him, and release Him. (For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast.) And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas: (who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison.) Pilate therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them. But they cried, saying, Crucify Him, crucify Him. And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath He done? I have found no cause of death in Him: I will therefore chastise Him, and let Him go. And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that He might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed. And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required. And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; but he delivered Jesus to their will. And as they led Him

away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus.

PILATE again bears witness that he could find no fault in Jesus. Again he shows a willingness to release his prisoner. But, willing as he was to do so, he delivered Him in the end to the will of the Jews. Thus end the good intentions of the natural man. Thus end the best of purposes we can form, if we form them in reliance on our own strength and wisdom. Herod, too, had examined our blessed Lord, and found in Him 'nothing worthy of death.' So ample is the testimony of His innocence! So important was it for us to know that His enemies could prove no offence against Him! He was then a lamb without spot. His atonement was entire, perfect, sufficient for the sins of all mankind. But the more He was proved to be innocent, the more the people would have Him punished as guilty. What abundant consolation should this afford to such of us, who suffer from the scorn and malice of others. It will be good for us if it make us both humble in our hearts, and in our conduct, more circumspect not to give offence, not to have our good, evil spoken of. It will be good for us if it incline us still more to be patient in well-doing, in the hope that we may overcome evil with good. Thus might we, like Simon the Cyrenian, bear the cross after Jesus. And this burden he bears 'after Jesus,' in the way Christ went before him, after the pattern of His meekness, gentleness, and love. Whilst he is ready to condemn himself, he thinks no evil of his neighbour. And whilst he grieves continually in his own heart, he rejoices in the Lord always.

LUKE, xxiii. 27-34.

AND there followed Him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented Him. But Jesus turning upon them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry? And there were also two other, malefactors, led with Him to be put to death. And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted His raiment, and cast lots.

It was well meant when this great company followed Jesus, and when the women also wept and lamented for Him. Sympathy in affliction is sweet to those who suffer; and it is our duty both to feel and to express it. But in this case the Saviour of mankind was not so greatly to be pitied as they who wept in His behalf. The cross was to Him, what our cross might always be to us, a crown of glory. Whilst to them, the day was soon to come when they should suffer the extremity of want and woe. So will it be hereafter, among all nations of mankind. Let us weep then for ourselves and our children, and grant, O Lord, that it may not be probable, that either we or they may thus perish from the light of Thy countenance for ever. How conspicuous here is our Saviour's charity! He not

only prays for men who had persecuted Him to death, but He even does so at the very instant when He is expiring under the most inconceivable torture and anguish. What a pattern have we here set before our eyes; we who are so soon provoked, so hard to forgive, even when we feel no smart, and the damage is imaginary. How far short is this of His perfection! How unlike to His true greatness of soul, who in His patience and charity, left us an example that we should follow His steps; and may we venture to hope, with humble thankfulness, that the voice of the same Mediator is still heard to say, 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.'

LUKE, xxiii. 35-45.

AND the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided Him, saying, He saved others; let Him save Himself, if He be Christ, the chosen of God. And the soldiers also mocked Him, coming to Him, and offering Him vinegar, and saying, If Thou be the king of the Jews, save Thyself. And a superscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS. And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on Him, saying, If Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise. And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness

over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.

THE different effects the judgments of God have upon the minds of men, is strikingly shown by these examples. Here were two malefactors brought by the providence of God to suffer in the company of His own Son, whose blood was shed for the sins of the whole world. But mark their end. One died, reproaching and blaspheming Christ, and breathed out his soul in the agonies of guilt and despair; the other saw, acknowledged, and openly confessed his Redeemer. How adorable is the wisdom of God, who has thus instructed us, and by setting the examples of His justice and mercy so near together, has taught us to fear without despair, and to trust without presumption! The promise of our Saviour to the penitent thief is certainly a monument of mercy, a standing comfort to all who truly repent, though at their last hour; an anchor of hope to sorrowful sinners, and a plain proof that sincere amendment never came too late. But let us not presume on delay. Let us not trust to a death-bed repentance. Let us act each hour as if we were indeed watching, for how can we feel sure that grace and strength will be given us at that moment to pray to Christ, and faith to lay hold of His cross?

LUKE, xxiii. 46-56.

AND when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost. Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying,

Certainly this was a righteous man. And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned. And all His acquaintance, and the women that followed Him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things. And, behold, there was a man named Joseph, a counsellor; and he was a good man, and a just: (the same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them;) he was of Arimathæa, a city of the Jews: who also himself waited for the kingdom of God. This man went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid. And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on. And the women also, which came with Him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how His body was laid. And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment.

Now let us turn from the cross of the malefactor to the cross of Christ! There we shall see our real ground of hope for pardon, not in the thief saved, but in Christ who saved him; not in the late contrition of our fellow-citizen, but in the blood of that Lamb without spot, which taketh away the sins of the world. See there our true pattern of a Christian life, and our true example of a Christian death, even that which concludes a Christian life! ‘Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit;’ these are the words which I trust we may all be able to say when the end of life shall come. For with these considerations, every Christian will be supported under the trials of the present life, will be armed against immoderate fears of death, and will be quickened to those virtues and graces which are necessary to justify his hopes of exchanging this present life for a state infinitely better.

From the death and burial of our Lord, St. Paul has drawn an argument for a holy life, describing it as the dying unto sin, and the being buried with Christ in His death (Rom. vi. 4 to 11.) And he speaks of himself and of his fellow-labourers in the Gospel as ‘always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.’ Let us endeavour to bear about in the body His dying for us. Let us abstain from everything that is unlawful; then shall we, like Him, fare better in our death than in this present life. And as He was taken from having nowhere to lay His head, and buried in the sepulchre of the rich, so shall we be removed from our wants and infirmities, to enjoy the riches of eternal life.

LUKE, xxiv. 1-12.

NOW upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments: and as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how He spake unto you when He was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And they remembered His words, and returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the

rest. It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles. And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not. Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass.

THE resurrection of itself was so strange a thing, and the minds of the disciples were so weighed down with sorrow, and prejudiced by the disappointments they had met with, that though Jesus had expressly foretold He should rise again, yet they hardly hoped for it, and would not believe the women when they acquainted them with the intimations they had received of it. It was a great privilege for these women to be the first who were made aware of our Lord's having risen from the dead. It was an advantage which they attained to, by having been the first to pay Him honour when they thought Him dead. Let us then do with zeal all the duties we are aware of, and we shall often meet with advantages which we little look for. And God has promised us, if we be disciples of our Lord, that no temptation shall befall us, beyond what we shall be able to bear; that He will with the temptation make also a way to escape. Never may we dishonour Christ with our lives, while with our lips we profess to serve Him! Never may we fail to live according to our profession, as they that hope for a better resurrection! Least of all let us neglect the great truths here repeated, that Christ must needs 'be crucified, and the third day rise again.' These are the words of consolation, of which the angels reminded the most faithful disciples of Christ. Thus, to derive from His death and resurrection the assurance that we shall not die eternally—this is to remember His words.

LUKE, xxiv. 13-27.

AND, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus Himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know Him. And He said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad? And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto Him, Art Thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? And He said unto them, What things? And they said unto Him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and have crucified Him. But we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre; and when they found not His body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that He was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but Him they saw not. Then He said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He ex-

pounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself.

IF we contemplate the situation and conduct of the apostles at this important crisis, it will sufficiently appear that enthusiasm must have been wholly excluded from their minds. They had followed our Saviour as a temporal Messiah, who would prove by miracles His claim to the throne of David, and rescue the thousands of Israel from a foreign yoke. But the event exhibited a sad reverse of all that they expected. In the death and burial of their Master, every fond hope seemed to be forever blasted, every ambitious thought was crushed, every prejudice of their religion and education was outraged. How disappointed, how dejected, how alarmed, must the coolest and steadiest of minds have been at such a scene! And exactly conformable to this is the artless description which the evangelists record of the feelings and conduct of their brethren. When the two disciples relate the crucifixion of their Lord, how full of perplexity and despondency is their narrative! When they were assembled together, it was with doors shut, for fear of the Jews. But this state of doubt and dismay was soon changed to triumphant faith, and these very men became witnesses of the resurrection of their crucified Lord. And as He rose from the grave with a glorified body, we may be encouraged to think that we shall have the happiness of knowing again those friends whom we loved on earth, and, what is more, of knowing our Saviour Christ; and the expectation of seeing 'Him as He is' ought to be the thing foremost in our thoughts, when we meditate on our hope of heavenly bliss.

LUKE, xxiv. 28-35.

AND they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and He made as though He would have gone further. But they constrained Him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And He went in to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as He sat at meat with them, He took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him; and He vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the scriptures? And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. And they told what things were done in the way, and how He was known of them in breaking of bread.

UNDOUBTEDLY our Lord's manner in breaking bread, and probably the form of words in the thanksgiving, were peculiar to our Saviour; and these latter were the same made use of by Him at the last supper. This being the case, how strongly were the apostles called upon by this action to remember their Lord, who had instituted that very form in remembrance of His death; and how properly did it accompany that discovery of Himself which He now thought fit to make to them. Observe also the kindness of our Lord to Simon Peter. He did not show Himself apart after His resurrection to John, His beloved disciple; but to him who had thrice denied Him, who had bitterly bewailed his crime, and whose mind required to be soothed and strengthened. This must indeed have

satisfied him that our Lord was willing to overlook his failings, that He took him back to be His disciple, to be beloved by Him as before, to partake of the same food at His hands, and to enjoy the same blessing from His lips! No wonder that they reprov'd themselves for their slowness of apprehension in not knowing Him. No wonder that they were eager to go and tell their brethren 'The Lord is risen indeed.'

LUKE, xxiv. 36-43.

AND as they thus spake, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And He said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when He had thus spoken, He shewed them His hands and His feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, He said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And He took it, and did eat before them.

THE certainty of our Lord's resurrection did not rest on a transient glance, or a single interview with His apostles. He conversed with them for forty days, which precluded every sort of illusion or mistake: nor did it depend upon the sole testimony of those chosen ministers of the Gospel, for He was seen by various other persons, and particularly by five hundred disciples at once. He

ate and drank with many to whom He was known before His crucifixion: and He made St. Thomas feel the print of the nails by which He had been fastened to the cross, and of the spear with which His side had been pierced, to convince him that He was the same Jesus who had been crucified, that He had flesh and bones, and was not a spirit. Thus the identity of His person was incontrovertibly ascertained, and all suspicion of His being a spirit was entirely removed. The act of eating was also a further proof that He was a real living man. And as we know that our Saviour possessed the real human nature after His resurrection, we are taught to expect the resurrection of the body. The light of reason had been able to induce men to look for another life after death, but never encouraged them to extend their hopes to the resurrection of the body. We now see that the body also will be partaker of the life to come. The exquisite knot which unites soul and body will again be tied, never more to be dissolved. Let us only believe: but for this we must have power from on high. Only through God's grace can we either repent or believe. Only through God's grace can we have peace or joy.

LUKE, xxiv. 44-53.

AND He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise

from the dead the third day : and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you : but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high. And He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy : and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.

BY a special operation of His Spirit our Lord gave them the power to understand the Scriptures, especially in those things which concerned the Messiah ; also that a new and gracious covenant of repentance and forgiveness of sins was to be established, which should be preached in His name, first to the Jews, and afterwards to the Gentiles, in all the nations of the world. Finally we read of our Saviour Christ, that it came to pass, while He was blessing His disciples, ‘He was parted from them and carried up into heaven.’ Thus was the ascension of our Saviour visibly performed in the presence and sight of the apostles, the certainty of which is very availing for the confirmation of our hopes. He is our forerunner into the regions of bliss, and thither we may hope to follow, as being of the same human nature with which He ascended, members of the same body, branches of the same vine. He has gone thither before us as the first fruits of those that follow, and we hope to follow Him as coming late to the same perfection. Let us then learn to pray without ceasing, to praise without intermission. Do Thou, O Lord Christ, receive our prayer ! Do Thou have mercy upon us !

‘ For Thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art most high in the glory of God the Father.’ Help us to show forth Thy glory. Make us to desire Thy blessed will. Lead us out far from this world. And take us to Thyself in heaven. Amen.

THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN.

JOHN, i. 1-5.

IN the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him ; and without Him was not any thing made that was made. In Him was life ; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness ; and the darkness comprehended it not.

ST. JOHN, the writer of this Gospel, was the son of Zebedee and Salome, and younger brother of James the Great, with whom he was brought up as a fisherman, and with whom he was called to be a disciple and apostle of Christ, when fishing upon the sea of Galilee. St. John was one of the four apostles to whom our Lord delivered His predictions relative to the destruction of Jerusalem, and the approaching calamities of the Jewish nation. He was also chosen with St. Peter and St. James to accompany our Saviour upon several occasions, when the other apostles were not permitted to be present. When Christ restored the daughter of Jairus to life ; when He was transfigured on the mount ; and when He endured His agony in the garden. Both St. Peter and St. John were entrusted to make preparations for our Saviour's eating the last passover, but St. John alone had the dis-

inction of leaning upon his Master's bosom, and of being called the beloved disciple of the Saviour of mankind. In the first three verses of this chapter nothing can be more clearly written to prove the eternal existence and the divinity of our Saviour. St. John's purpose was to make known that our Lord made the world, that His title of Jesus was given Him at His circumcision, and the title of Christ belonged to His office, which He had not exercised many years; therefore he produces a new name of His, as yet unknown to the world, which belonged to Him before He was made man. Under that title, 'the Word,' he shows that He had a being 'in the beginning,' when all things were to be created, and consequently before they were created. This is the first step. The next is, that the same Word which then had existence 'was with God' when He made all things. Therefore we may well conceive it is He to whom God said, 'Let us make man.' The evangelist then proceeds from the creation by 'the Word' to the redemption of the world by the same Word. He declared that He had given to all creatures their first being: he now shows that He restored 'life' to man when he lay dead in trespasses and sins. And the doctrine of that life which He taught was the means designed by God to enlighten all mankind and instruct them in their duty. To Him then bring your wants, for He is merciful to relieve; to Him disclose your fears, He is powerful to strengthen; on Him lay the burden of your sins, 'He is able to save unto the uttermost those that come unto God by Him.' For He was in the beginning with God and was God; and without Him was not anything made that was made.

JOHN, i. 6-14.

THERE was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His Name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

JOHN THE BAPTIST was sent by God on purpose to bear witness that Christ was the Messiah, the true Teacher sent from heaven, that so, by means of this testimony, all men might believe on Him. That the eternal Son of God should condescend to visit in human form His people as their Saviour and Redeemer, is an event which may well be allowed to excite our admiration. But how greatly does our astonishment rise when we are informed that His people refused to receive so gracious a visitor. In order that mortal man might attain everlasting life, this eternal Word was born in human flesh, assumed our nature, and in this flesh of ours, (as in a tabernacle,) appeared amongst us most gloriously, in such a manner as was not possible for any, but the one true eternal Son of God. As 'the Word' dwelt among us full of grace and

truth, so by Him only grace and truth come into the world. By Him we may obtain grace to repent truly of our sins, be absolved from all our past offences, be reconciled to our heavenly Father, and accounted righteous in His sight. By Him we may be continually enlightened, influenced, assisted in our whole duty through His Holy Spirit. By Him we may be preserved from all evil during our present life, and when we die we may go by Him to Heaven, and there live for ever with Him, and His holy angels. And none shall pluck us out of His hand. He that is the author, will be the finisher of our faith. 'He that hath begun a good work in us, will perform it unto the end.'

JOHN, i. 15-28.

JOHNS bare witness of Him, and cried, saying, This was He of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for He was before me. And of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him. And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give of an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the

prophet Esaias. And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose. These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.

SUCH an ample manifestation of Himself as this, God never made to mankind before. These things were reserved to be discovered by Him, who alone, being in the bosom of His Father, knew before all ages the secret counsels of God, concerning the redemption and salvation of men. And whatever is yet known concerning them, is only by this revelation of the only begotten Son of God. St. John's reply to the priests and Levites shows his own humility, and at the same time bears testimony to the dignity of Jesus, He says, 'I indeed baptize with water;' my baptism, like my preaching, is preparatory only, leading to another baptism of the Spirit, which shall cleanse the souls of penitents from everything that defileth, through faith in the Messiah, and His heavenly doctrine. And this Messiah is not far off, as ye imagine Him to be: 'there standeth One among you, whom ye know not;' He appears like other men, lowly, unattended, undistinguished; He doth not as yet think proper to manifest His power and glory; but hereafter ye will find Him to be far other than He seems. As to myself, of whom some are pleased to entertain an high opinion, I am nothing; He who cometh after me is preferred before me, as much as the greatest master is preferred before the meanest of his servants, who is deemed unworthy to perform the least office about his person. This testimony did St. John give to the Saviour

of the world, in the presence of the priests, Levites, and people. Intent upon humbling himself, that his great Lord and Master might be exalted, he declared himself a messenger only, sent to prepare His ways: and everything in him, and about him, spoke the same language. With regard to ourselves, we have all been baptized with water, unto repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. We do not rest upon the formal ceremony, though we do not undervalue it, as it is that which was appointed of our Lord Himself, and dignified by His own example. But as the body without the soul is dead, so the form without the spirit is dead also. The outward purification must be answered by inward purity; and baptism must 'save us,' not 'as it is, the putting away of the filth of the flesh,' but 'as it is, the answer of a good conscience towards God.'

JOHN, i. 29-34.

THE next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is He of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for He was before me. And I knew Him not: but that He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him not: but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.

ST. JOHN points out Jesus as the expiatory sacrifice, as the grand atonement for the sins of mankind foretold by the prophet Isaiah, as applied by our Lord Himself, and by the Holy Spirit; for He was the true Paschal Lamb typified in the mysterious institution of the Pass-over. Behold here, says the Baptist, Him of whom I spake to you, the Lamb without spot or blemish, the perfect emblem of innocence and patience, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Yea, behold the Lamb of God,—a Lamb, not of an earthly, but divine extraction, the Lamb of God's own choosing and appointment, the Lamb offered up by God Himself unto Himself, the Lamb that taketh away sin; not some particular sin, but sin in general, the strength as well as the guilt of sin, our inclinations to it, as well as our obligations to punishment for it; the sin, not only of some particular persons, but of all mankind; the sin, not only of Abraham's, but of Adam's posterity, the sin of the Gentiles as well as the Jews; for 'He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.' 'For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.' If then we have found in Christ Jesus the hope of safety, we shall not fail to point to Him, and proclaim to our everlasting comfort, 'Behold the Lamb of God.'

JOHN, i. 35-51.

A GAIN the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as He walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. Then

Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto Him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest Thou? . He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him that day: for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two which heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, He said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone. The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! Nathanael saith unto Him, Whence knowest Thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. Nathanael answered and saith unto Him, Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel. Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. And He saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

ONE of the two disciples here mentioned by St. John was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, the other was thought to have been St. John himself. Andrew's expression, 'we have found the Messiah,' implies that their minds had long been filled with an expectation and desire for the coming of the Messiah. As the title Jesus marks the person of our Lord, so does that of Christ denote His office. It is applied to Him to show that, as formerly, by the ceremony of anointing, God consecrated those whom He called to some certain offices, so was this Jesus to be separated, though not to a visible unction, yet by the invisible power and grace of the Holy Spirit, for all those offices to which men were anointed by God's special appointment; namely,—the offices of a prophet, a priest, and a king. Here we have a second case where the calling of one disciple leads to another, Jesus 'findeth Philip,' 'Philip findeth Nathanael.' How important is it then to propagate the Christian faith. How know we but that some Nathanael is at hand, waiting only for us to find him, that he may be brought to the knowledge of the truth? How can we help earnestly inviting him in the words of Philip to Nathanael, 'Come and see.' The difficulty which Nathanael made about believing, arose from his having read in the Scriptures that Christ should be born at Bethlehem. In his objection, therefore, there was no guile. There was no secret resolution not to be convinced; but an honest intention to prove all things, and hold fast that which should be proved to be good. And how signal is the praise which he received! 'An Israelite indeed in whom is no guile.' May we deserve the same approbation, and, like him, hope to see 'heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man!'

JOHN, ii. 1-11.

AND the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: and both Jesus was called, and His disciples, to the marriage. And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto Him, They have no wine. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come. His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it. And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And He saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it. When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, and saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now. This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory: and His disciples believed on Him.

ON this occasion, as on many others, our Lord showed that His religion was not morose and unsocial: and He discountenanced by His example, that course of rigid abstinence and mortification by which some, who would be thought His most perfect disciples, have quite misunderstood the Gospel. The expression made use of by Him to His mother of 'woman,' conveys no idea of disrespect, but

was used to females of the highest rank. In our Saviour's reply to her, He says: This is an affair in which you are no way concerned: leave it therefore to me, and I will choose a proper time for it. He signifies that this was not a matter proper for her authority to interpose in; and that miracles were not to be wrought for gratifying the requests of friends, but had their proper seasons, of which He was the best judge. After our Lord had given this gentle rebuke, with the authority of a Prophet sent from God, and with a design to prevent a similar interference in future, He suffered her request to sway with Him; and seems to have made the first display of His glorious power partly in deference to her, for this was the first instance which Jesus gave of His Divine power: and it produced its intended effect, by confirming the faith of those disciples who had so lately come to Him. As our Lord's conversation was on all occasions free and familiar, open and undisguised, sober and rational, and His carriage free from all rigid and unnatural severity, so His miraculous works were no less evident signs of mercy, goodness, and generosity, than of power; and equally adapted to convince men's understandings and engage their affections, as to remove their maladies or relieve their wants. This His first public miracle was nothing more than an act of kindness and humanity towards a poor relation, by a seasonable supply of what was wanting in His entertainment, and in the same manner His last miracle, when He healed the High Priest's servant's ear, was nothing less than an instance of the highest and most undeserved compassion in healing one who came to take away His life.

JOHN, ii. 12-25.

AFTER this He went down to Capernaum, He, and His mother, and His brethren, and His disciples: and they continued there not many days. And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: and when He had made a scourge of small cords, He drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; and said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence: make not my Father's house an house of merchandise. And His disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up. Then answered the Jews and said unto Him, What sign shewest Thou unto us, seeing that Thou doest these things? Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt Thou rear it up in three days? But He spake of the temple of His body. When therefore He was risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said. Now when He was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in His name, when they saw the miracles which He did. But Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, because He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for He knew what was in man.

It appears that Christ twice drove the buyers from the temple; once at the beginning, and once again towards the close, of His ministry, and by calling it 'His Father's

house,' He indirectly calls Himself the Son of God, or the Messiah. It was quite four hundred years since any prophet had appeared in Israel, or since any miracle had been performed there, it was therefore not to be wondered at, that the Jews were surprised at our Lord's interference, and asked Him what sign He had to show, as a proof of His authority. His answer related to His resurrection from the dead. 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' The Jews thought He spoke of the building in which they were assembled, but in reality He meant the temple of His body, and though the prediction of raising it up again, was for the present dark and hard to be understood, yet afterwards, when the accomplishment of it made it clear, it proved a great confirmation of the disciples' faith. Thus the faith of our Lord's followers was originally founded not on blind credulity, but on rational conviction; not on internal persuasion alone, but on clear and stupendous miracles: proofs submitted to their senses and approved of by their reason, which enthusiasm could not have counterfeited, and never would have required: and at every step of its progress, as their faith was called to signalise itself by new exertions, and to sustain new trials, it was fortified by new proofs. Jesus did not confide in the Jews. For He knew the hearts of all men, (an awful thought to the unrepentant sinner); but it is the greatest comfort of the humble and earnest Christian, who is struggling against his infirmities, to be able to say with St. Paul, 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.'

JOHN, iii. 1-13.

THERE was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto Him, Rabbi, we know that Thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto Him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. Nicodemus answered and said unto Him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.

IN the beginning of this chapter we have the mystery of the Holy Trinity presented to our contemplation. Ex-

press and distinct mention is made of God the Father, by whose power and immediate presence with Jesus the miracles were wrought. There is also mention of the Son who declares Himself to have come down from heaven, and even to be in heaven at the instant of His conversing with Nicodemus on earth; and of that Holy Spirit whose prolific operation upon the waters of baptism effects the new and spiritual, as of old it did the natural creation when moving on the face of the yet unformed deep, and whose sanctifying graces act powerfully, though often undiscernibly, in changing the minds of men. And in our Lord's interesting conversation with Nicodemus, He communicates to him the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith. First, the necessity of a new birth, or regeneration by baptism, and the Holy Spirit to salvation; secondly, the redemption of mankind by the death of Christ through faith, of which death the brazen serpent was a type; thirdly, the original cause of this mode of redemption, the love of God. Our Saviour intimates that the effects of God's Holy Spirit in the regeneration of men are perceptible, though the manner and degrees of His operation on their souls are so various that we can give no account of them. But let all examine how it is with themselves: for if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; he lives and thinks as one who knows 'that as many as are baptized into Jesus Christ, are baptized unto His death.' And 'therefore they are buried with Him by baptism unto death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so they also should walk in newness of life.'

JOHN, iii. 14-21.

AND as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

GREAT as the Son of God was, He died for the sins of the world, and being lifted up on the cross, He fulfilled what was typified by Moses, when he lifted up the brazen serpent. By these means all that believe in Him will be brought to everlasting life, as all that looked on the brazen serpent were cured of their diseases. How glorious an effect is it of God's wonderful love to man that He should allow His only begotten Son (of the same divine nature and perfections with Himself) to give Himself up to a painful and ignominious death, for those who daily and hourly commit the heaviest offences against Him. The end of Christ's coming was to give light unto the

world, to call sinners to repentance, to cast out the prince of this world, to reconcile us in the body of His flesh, to dissolve the works of the devil; to become a propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. And he that believeth on the Son of God, embracing His doctrine and obeying His commands, shall certainly escape the punishment of sin, and obtain the reward of everlasting life; but on the contrary, whosoever wilfully and finally rejects this great salvation, abusing the mercy of God, and despising His proffered means of grace, will incur condemnation without remedy and without excuse, because he obstinately withstands the greatest evidences of truth, and the most gracious terms of salvation.

JOHN, iii. 22–36.

AFTER these things came Jesus and His disciples into the land of Judæa; and there He tarried with them, and baptized. And John also was baptizing in Ænon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized. For John was not yet cast into prison. Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying. And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, He that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to Him. John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before Him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's

voice : this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease. He that cometh from above is above all : he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth : he that cometh from heaven is above all. And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth ; and no man receiveth his testimony. He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true. For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God : for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life : and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life ; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

It is evident that St. John wrote his Gospel to supply the omissions of the other evangelists, for he does not describe the circumstances of the death of John the Baptist, but alludes to his imprisonment as a fact well known. By the character and conduct of St. John here displayed, in his repressing the jealousy of his followers, and asserting the superiority and glory of Christ, in how pleasing a manner are the ministers of Christ instructed, that they are to bear testimony to Him, not to themselves ; to seek His glory, not their own : that they should take pleasure in the success of their brethren's labours, by which the cause of their common Master is promoted ; that the rising lights of the Church should do honour to those who have gone before them, and the setting ones rejoice to be outshone by those who are coming after them ; that envy and jealousy, in short, ought to have no place among the disciples of the Lamb of God, on whom descended and abode the celestial Dove. He that believes on the Son of God, embracing His doctrine, and obeying His commands, hath life eternal. This is indeed a treasure, a pearl of great price ! We then enjoy this blessing, who believe that

God hath sent His Son that He may give eternal life to as many as receive Him: nay, to all who receive the offer, which is made in plain and simple terms: 'Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die, but I will raise him up in the last day.' 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'

JOHN, iv. 1-30.

WHEN therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (though Jesus Himself baptized not, but His disciples,) He left Judæa, and departed again into Galilee. And He must needs go through Samaria. Then cometh He to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. (For His disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.) Then saith the woman of Samaria unto Him, How is it that Thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water. The woman saith unto Him, Sir, Thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast Thou that living water? Art Thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well,

and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. The woman saith unto Him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw. Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly. The woman saith unto Him, Sir, I perceive that Thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. The woman saith unto Him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when He is come, He will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am He. And upon this came His disciples, and marvelled that He talked with the woman: yet no man said, What seekest Thou? or, Why talkest Thou with her? The woman then left her water-pot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ? Then they went out of the city, and came unto Him.

SAMARIA lies between Judea and Galilee. The description here given of Sychar puts it beyond all doubt that it is the same with Sychem, or Shechem; the difference between the two names proceeding probably from a corrupt way of pronouncing. The principal object of veneration in this part of the country is Jacob's well, over which a church was formerly erected. It is situated at a small distance from Sychem, on the road to Jerusalem, and has been visited by pilgrims of all ages; but particularly since the Christian era, as the place where our Saviour revealed Himself to the woman of Samaria. The animosity between the Samaritans and the Jews began on the separation of the ten tribes, when an idolatrous worship was set up at Dan and Bethel. It was increased by the opposition of the Samaritans to the building of the temple. And it was brought to the greatest height on the erection of a temple on Mount Gerizim by Manasseh, when driven from Jerusalem by Nehemiah, and in which religious worship was maintained in opposition to the temple at Jerusalem. It appears, from the Talmud, that according to the traditions it was held lawful for the Jews to make purchases of the Samaritans, but not to receive kindness from them, or to eat and drink with them. But Christ here shows that He despised all such traditions which had no foundation in the law of God, or in equity, and tended only to impair the dictates of common friendship or humanity. Jesus unfolded to the Samaritan woman by degrees that He could give her a never-failing fountain of comfort and satisfaction, and that by living water He meant the spiritual doctrine of life and salvation. Perceiving Jesus to be a Prophet, she now begs Him to resolve the great question of dispute between the Jews and the Samaritans, but He told her that the subject of their disputes would shortly be removed, as the temples themselves would be destroyed, and the privileges about which they contended

would be taken from them. For He said, The time is at hand, and is now actually come, when *they* only shall be accounted true worshippers who give their hearts and souls to God, to love and obey Him in all things: for that is the worship which is always most acceptable to the Father.

JOHN, iv. 31-42.

IN the meanwhile His disciples prayed Him, saying, Master, eat. But He said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought Him ought to eat? Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work. Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours. And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on Him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did. So when the Samaritans were come unto Him, they besought Him that He would tarry with them: and He abode there two days. And many more believed because of His own word; and said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.

IN answering His disciples, Jesus said : ‘My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work.’ This should be our reflection when we are urged to share in the eager pursuit of wealth, or in too great a love for the things of this world. This should be our great rule of life ; this the great object of our labour ; not to finish our own work, but God’s ; not to do our own will, but His. Let us remember that in this harvest ‘he that reapeth receiveth wages.’ And herein also is that saying true, ‘one soweth, and another reapeth.’ True it is in cases where our labour may seem to fail. The seed may have been notwithstanding sown, in which ‘both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.’ And true it is in this sense also, that it is Christ who really sows that seed in the converted heart, of which if we labour in thus well doing, He graciously allows us to reap the fruit. The Samaritans at first believed in Christ for the saying of the woman, but after coming to Him and hearing Him, they remarked, ‘Now we believe, not because of thy saying ; for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.’ How greatly it were to be wished that all who now name the name of Christ were like to these Samaritans. They heard the doctrines of this Divine teacher for the short space of two days : we, in the writings of the Evangelists, have a complete summary of His whole ministry ; and joined to the detail of His numerous miracles, we have the delineation of His admirable character, His piety, His fortitude, His patience, His resignation. In the figured language of the apostles, we ourselves have heard Him preach ; we have seen Him crucified ; we have seen Him rise again, and we experience His present power in the providential preservation of His Church and support of His doctrine. May He give us this power and joy in believing, this persuasion of love within ourselves, that He is indeed our Saviour from the bonds of sin and death !

JOHN, iv. 43-54.

NOW after two days He departed thence, and went into Galilee. For Jesus Himself testified, that a prophet hath no honour in his own country. Then when He was come into Galilee, the Galilæans received Him, having seen all the things that He did at Jerusalem at the feast: for they also went unto the feast. So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where He made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judæa into Galilee, he went unto Him, and besought Him that He would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death. Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe. The nobleman saith unto Him, Sir, come down ere my child die. Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way. And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth. Then enquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house. This is again the second miracle that Jesus did, when He was come out of Judæa into Galilee.

WE have an example here how little riches can produce real happiness. This nobleman, whose son lay at the point of death, found nothing to soothe his distressed feelings, either in his honours or his wealth. Affliction did more for him than either, for it brought him as a

suppliant to the feet of Jesus; and if there had been any want of faith in him before this, all doubt was now removed, for 'he believed.' 'He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully persuaded that what our Lord had promised He was able also to perform. By his own believing we are to understand that a consideration of the power and goodness of Christ in raising his son from that languishing and hopeless condition, disposed him to attend to His doctrine, to acknowledge His Divine authority, and to become His disciple. By his whole house believing is meant, that he did not content himself with those improvements of the Divine mercy made singly in his own person, but took pains to propagate all possible effects of this miracle, and to press the natural consequences of it upon as many as came under his influence and authority. In both these respects he is, and ought to be, our example; for we ever require to be quickened and confirmed in the faith which we profess; and we have too much occasion to use the most strenuous exertion, for establishing and advancing others in good principles and practices, and for doing this, every fresh experience of God's great goodness should minister to us an occasion of encouragement. May God give grace to all who are of this household, that they may believe in Christ as the Saviour of the soul! May He make us to agree in one faith, to walk by one rule of holiness and love, and hereafter to dwell together in one 'building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens!'

JOHN, v. 1-16.

AFTER this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had. And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, He saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole? The impotent man answered Him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me. Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath. The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, It is the sabbath day: it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed. He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk. Then asked they him, What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed, and walk? And he that was healed wist not who it was: for Jesus had conveyed Himself away, a multitude being in that place. Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee. The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus, which had made him whole. And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay Him, because He had done these things on the sabbath day.

It seems that by the pool here mentioned there was a building called Bethesda, or 'the house of mercy,' having five porches, or separate divisions for the sick. These porches were the several entrances by which the unclean went down to the water to be washed. At this pool there were many sick, and only one was healed. In our spiritual infirmity there are many who are made whole. Yet, compared with those who never reach unto the healing waters, few are they who seem to profit by them. The fact is, that here the will is itself diseased. We are like this infirm man at Bethesda, who was unable to walk, and yet could only be healed by first walking, nay, by running and outrunning others, to the pool. We must be holy in order to love holiness, and in order to be holy we must first have faith. And yet we cannot believe without being inclined towards belief, without loving the things believed, and wishing them to be true. Let us then learn to be patient and persevering in our prayers, and let us learn that God has other ways than those we think of, to give us the health we need. To move is first necessary; but He can help us first to move. We must will to be made whole; but He can help us so to will. His voice has already bidden us to rise and walk, His grace can enable us to obey. Further, let us listen to this His solemn charge,—'Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.' This exhortation we shall do well to call to mind, whenever we experience, through God's mercy, deliverance from any evil we have felt or feared. And let us take care that we sin no more, lest there come upon us that thing, far worse than all this world's woes, eternal death!

JOHN, v. 17-30.

BUT Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill Him, because He not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God. Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth Him all things that Himself doeth: and He will shew Him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom He will. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent Him. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself; and hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation. I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.

OUR Saviour here tells the Jews that His Father, the Creator and Governor of the world, ever has, and will continue, to give and preserve life, and to do good on the Sabbath day. And is there anything that the Father doeth which the Son may not do likewise? He does nothing in opposition to God's eternal and divine laws, but everything in imitation of Him, and by His direction and appointment; for He was sent into the world, to fulfil the gracious designs of God's mercy and goodness towards men. Even in raising the dead, which is a far greater miracle than healing the sick, God hath communicated His power to Christ, and as His Father raiseth from the grave, so will He raise whomsoever He pleases. For the Father 'hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man.' Therefore it is, that He will be the judge of all mankind, because He is at once both God and man. Let us then seek to be saved through faith in Christ. Let us be willing to rejoice in Christ, not for a season, but for ever. May He make our will to be one with His, and one with the Father's! May He make us to be one with the Father, and one with His blessed self! May He make us in point of faith and charity to be also one with each other! May He make us to pass from death to life, at once, because we believe in Him, and because we love our brethren!

JOHN, v. 31-47.

IF I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true. There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true. Ye sent unto John, and He bare witness unto the truth.

But I receive not testimony from man : but these things I say, that ye might be saved. He was a burning and a shining light : and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light. But I have greater witness than that of John : for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me. And the Father Himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His shape. And ye have not His word abiding in you : for whom He hath sent, Him ye believe not. Search the scriptures ; for in them ye think ye have eternal life : and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life. I receive not honour from men. But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not : if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive. How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only ? Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father : there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me : for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words ?

JESUS had been declaring great things, many of them new things ; so that the Jews marvelled. He therefore concludes His discourse, by showing the grounds of His authority, and He proceeds to appeal to three testimonies, by which they might be convinced that His witness was true. First to that of John the Baptist, who in the most express terms bore a faithful and honourable testimony to the truth, assuring them that he saw the Spirit in a visible form descend upon the Son of God ; secondly, to that of the Father, who hath in several ways borne witness of Him ;

and thirdly, to that of the Holy Scriptures, and if we search them, we may there see that they testify of Him, that He is the Christ, the Son of God, by whom alone we can obtain eternal life. But there was nothing in the character of the Jews in common with that of the Father: nothing which led them, when they saw the Son (whom He had sent), to look on Him as precious and honourable. 'They saw no beauty in Him that they should desire Him.' Let their unbelief be a warning to us, 'on whom the ends of the world are come.' For we know that 'He received from God the Father honour and glory,' when the works which the Father had given Him to finish, bare witness of Him. We have also a sure word of prophecy; 'if we search the Scriptures we perceive that they testify of Him.' And these assurances are given to them 'that believe on the name of the Son of God; that they may know that they have eternal life, and that they may believe on His name.' 'For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.'

JOHN, vi. 1-14.

AFTER these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias. And a great multitude followed Him, because they saw His miracles which He did on them that were diseased. And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there He sat with His disciples. And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh. When Jesus then lifted up His eyes, and saw a great company come unto Him, He saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? And this He said to

prove him : for He Himself knew what He would do. Philip answered Him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little. One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto Him, There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes : but what are they among so many ? And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. And Jesus took the loaves ; and when He had given thanks, He distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down ; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would. When they were filled, He said unto His disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten. Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.

HERE we find an omission of many things which are recorded by the other Evangelists. It is probable that a whole year intervened between the cure at the pool of Bethesda, which occurred at one passover, and this miracle of the loaves, which occurred at the passover in the following year. The account, however, of the multiplication of the loaves given by St. John is more circumstantial than that given by the other Evangelists ; and it is observable that this is the only miracle which he relates in common with the rest. We learn from our Saviour's command that we should avoid all wastefulness of the good things with which Providence has blessed us. We should manage our substance on all occasions to the best advantage, and so as to approve ourselves charitable and kind, and at the same

time not to be profuse and indiscreet. Jesus, by setting His whole store before the multitude, has left us a pattern of beneficence and largeness of heart. Yet this same Jesus would not that even the fragments should be lost; and herein He hath showed us that charity is very consistent with frugality; indeed, not only that they may, but they ever should go together. For further practical improvement we should take occasion to observe the ability and readiness of God to feed and fill all those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. He distributes to the faithful this bread of life eternal. Let us not neglect this heavenly nourishment. Let us ask for it in prayer as for our daily bread, and partake of it habitually in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, to the everlasting comfort of our souls.

JOHN, vi. 15-29.

WHEN Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take Him by force, to make Him a king, He departed again into a mountain Himself alone. And when even was now come, His disciples went down unto the sea, and entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them. And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew. So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship: and they were afraid. But He saith unto them, It is I; be not afraid. Then they willingly received Him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went. The day following, when the people which stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was none other

boat there, save that one whereinto His disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with His disciples into the boat, but that His disciples were gone away alone ; (howbeit there came other boats from Tiberias, nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks :) when the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither His disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus. And when they had found Him on the other side of the sea, they said unto Him, Rabbi, when camest Thou hither ? Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you : for Him hath God the Father sealed. Then said they unto Him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God ? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.

ACCORDING to the Jews' false notion of the Messiah they expected Him to be a great temporal prince ; therefore they wished to make Him a king, for they were struck with astonishment and respect : but Jesus, who knew the thoughts and designs of men, perceived their intention, and withdrew Himself. It seems strange that at such a time His disciples should without Him have gone down unto the sea, and entered into a ship to pass over to Capernaum. But from St. Matthew we learn that He constrained them. Whatever we undertake let us consult God's will, and wait as it were for orders from our Lord. And let us never be tempted to enter upon any business wherein we cannot trust that we have Christ with us. The metaphor which Christ uses through much of this chapter

of expressing spiritual food by meat and drink, is familiar to Eastern nations, and occurs frequently in Scripture and in other writings. By the expression ‘labour not for the meat which perisheth,’ our blessed Saviour’s meaning is not to discourage that labour and industry which the providence of God has made necessary for men in their respective stations, and the neglect of which is therefore sinful; but He recommends, as comparatively of far higher importance than any concerns of this world, a careful preparation for the next; and that meat which endureth unto everlasting life is meat worth labouring for indeed: happy are they that after all their labour they can attain it; they will live in perfect health, and strength, and vigour, both of body and mind; they will live in joy, in bliss, and glory, the highest that can be imagined; they will live with the holy angels, with Christ, with God Himself, and enjoy all the pleasures that are at His right hand, and that, too, not for some years or ages only, but for evermore.

JOHN, vi. 30–40.

THEY said therefore unto Him, What sign shewest Thou then, that we may see, and believe Thee? what dost Thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven: but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Then said they unto Him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to

me shall never hunger ; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not. All that the Father giveth me shall come to me ; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which He hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of Him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life : and I will raise him up at the last day.

NOT satisfied with the miracles they had seen, not even with that of the loaves by which they were fed, the people still demand as a further proof another and different sign from heaven, as they said, that their fathers had eaten 'manna in the desert.' Our Lord replied that the true 'bread of God' is not the manna which Moses seemed to give them, any more than it is the meal with which He Himself had fed them, but it 'is He which cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world.' And this is Jesus Christ. This is He whose servants, whose people, whose redeemed, we are. He is our bread, because bread is the chief food to all mankind. He is our bread, because by bread our life is supported and our strength nourished ; because by Him alone we are able to do the work of God ; by Him alone we have life, to live for ever. The Father gives those only to Christ, who are prepared by an honest heart, and willingness to learn. For this is His will that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth in Him, may have everlasting life. 'Lord, evermore give us this bread.' Give us what else we shall hunger for in vain, the will to come to Thee. Give us the grace to believe on Thee, that our souls may not thirst for ever.

JOHN, vi. 41-58.

THE Jews then murmured at Him, because He said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that He saith, I came down from heaven? Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me. Not that any man hath seen the Father, save He which is of God, He hath seen the Father. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us His flesh to eat? Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which

came down from heaven : not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead : he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.

OUR Saviour here speaks of those who, in consequence of embracing His religion, shall inherit eternal life ; and He declares that no one can attain this saving faith without the directing influence of the Holy Spirit ; and that every one who has had an opportunity of becoming acquainted with the evidences of the Gospel, and has duly profited by the instruction and assistance which his heavenly Father has afforded him, will partake of a blessed resurrection. He also declares that He is the true bread of life, whom God hath sent into the world, to direct and bring us up in the way of everlasting life. And His general doctrine seems to resolve itself in this ; that, whether with faith or without, whether in the sacraments or out of the sacraments, whether before Christ or since, whether here or hereafter, no man ever was, or will be, accepted, but in and through the great propitiation made by the flesh and blood of Christ. And he that feeds on Christ, and makes His incarnation, His crucifixion, His resurrection, His ascension, and His intercession, the daily nourishment of his soul, even he shall live by Him, and prove it to be faithfully and truly promised, that ‘ He that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.’

JOHN, vi. 59–71.

THESE things said He in the synagogue, as He taught in Capernaum. Many therefore of His disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard

saying; who can hear it? When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples murmured at it, He said unto them, Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where He was before? It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray Him. And He said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered Him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus answered them, have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray Him, being one of the twelve.

OUR Lord, whilst He thus enforced those most important Christian doctrines, knew all the time that there were some among His professed disciples who were averse to believe. And it was for their sakes that He repeated the necessity of their being drawn by the Father. For the more we are convinced that our faith is of God's giving, we shall be both more watchful if we have it, to maintain it, and more earnest to pray for it, if as yet we have it not. And He would have had these unbelieving disciples betake themselves to more hearty prayer, and humble reliance on the Giver of all good gifts. They however, on the contrary, 'from that time went back and walked no more with Him.' And upon their turning away, our Lord inquired of the twelve, whether *they* were

in like manner offended, whether *they* would in like manner desert Him? ‘Lord, to whom shall we go?’ replied Peter, ‘Thou hast the words of eternal life.’ In this answer, there are three things expressed or implied, as the ground of their constancy and adherence to Christ. The first is, the miserable condition they should be in, if they did forsake Him, having no other in whom they could trust. The second is, the excellency of His religion, and the certain means it afforded of obtaining that which is the great end of religion, a blessed life after this—‘Thou hast the words of eternal life.’ The third is, the authority and Divine commission of Christ on which their faith and confidence were built, for ‘We believe and are sure,’—that is, we have determined for ourselves, from what we have heard and seen,—‘that Thou art that Christ’ the Son of God who giveth life to all, and that Thou wilt give eternal life to all that believe in Thee. Let this then be our own reflection, when we are perplexed by any difficulty either of faith or practice. Let us not trust in what we are. But the more we have enjoyed of light and knowledge, the more let us endeavour to obtain of grace, the more let us labour to advance in faith, holiness, and love.

JOHN, vii. 1–13.

AFTER these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for He would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill Him. Now the Jews’ feast of tabernacles was at hand. His brethren therefore said unto Him, Depart hence, and go into Judæa, that Thy disciples also may see the works that Thou doest. For there is no man that

doeth anything in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If Thou do these things, shew Thyself to the world. For neither did His brethren believe in Him. Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come: but your time is alway ready. The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil. Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet unto this feast; for my time is not yet full come. When He had said these words unto them, He abode still in Galilee. But when His brethren were gone up, then went He also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret. Then the Jews sought Him at the feast, and said, Where is He? And there was much murmuring among the people concerning Him: for some said, He is a good man: others said, Nay; but He deceiveth the people. Howbeit no man spake openly of Him for fear of the Jews.

JESUS went about preaching in the cities of Galilee, rather than in Judea, because the rulers of the Jews sought for some occasion to put Him to death. He conducted Himself with this prudent caution because His time was not yet come. This therefore is an example to us, that we should on no occasion run into danger without necessity, on presumption of Divine protection, but that we should use all lawful means which God has put into our hands in order to avoid it. The Feast of Tabernacles was one of the three great feasts, which occurred on the fifteenth of the seventh month, answering to the end of our September or the beginning of October; it continued for eight days. To what extent His brethren did or did not believe in Him at this time is uncertain, but it is probable that the same worldly-minded notions of the temporal power and grandeur of the Messiah's kingdom, which infected even the apostles, had taken possession of His relations. Hence they endeavoured to check His exertions to instruct the people, which they

conceived to be extravagant and enthusiastic. But God Almighty chose, and our Lord chose for Himself, that His Gospel should force its way in the world even under disadvantageous circumstances, and through the greatest difficulties and oppositions, by the notoriety of the miracles performed, and the purity of the doctrine taught. That which should have rendered the Saviour more honourable and lovely in our eyes, brought Him to be despised, and rendered Him unwelcome and forbidding. Never let us set ourselves against any man for the strictness of his principles or his life, or for the faithfulness of his reproof. They that love holiness, love holy men ; they that humbly and sincerely desire to walk with God, will be thankful to every one that brings them nearer to Him, for ‘he that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul ; but he that heareth reproof getteth understanding.’

JOHN, vii. 14–24.

NOW about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught. And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned ? Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me. If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory : but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him. Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law ? Why go ye about to kill me ? The people answered and said, Thou hast a devil : who goeth about to kill Thee ? Jesus answered and said unto

them, I have done one work, and ye all marvel. Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the sabbath day circumcise a man. If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day? Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.

OUR Lord's answer clearly shows us, that they best understand the will of God, who are most careful to practise it; so likewise, that the best way to know what God is, is to transcribe His perfections in our lives and actions; to be holy, and just, and good, and merciful as He is; also that a hearty desire and endeavour to do the will of God, is the best security and preservative against dangerous errors, and mistakes in matters of religion. It appears that the Jews had at this time found fault with Jesus respecting His healing a man on the Sabbath day, but surely the law of doing good, and relieving the miserable at all times, is more ancient and excellent than those Mosaical laws, by which the Jews were forced to dispense with the law of the Sabbath, in order to comply with the law of circumcision. For they used to circumcise each child on the eighth day from the birth, whether it were the Sabbath or not. We must not then judge according to the outward appearance, but according to the real truth. Many persons fall into great error on the subject of their faith; and suppose that they are in no wise answerable for what they cannot understand or believe: whereas it is possible, nay, very probable, that their want of understanding and of faith may be chiefly their own fault. If we would know the will of God, we must be ready and desirous to do that will in everything; to submit at once and altogether to whatever we are taught of God, and instantly to give up

our own notions and ways to the teaching of the Holy Spirit and the Holy Word. Is this our frame of mind? Have we this teachable spirit? If not let us pray for it, seek it, strive above all things to attain it; and if we have this godly desire, we shall be daily 'growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.'

• JOHN, vii. 25-36.

THEN said some of them of Jerusalem, Is not this He whom they seek to kill? But, lo, He speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto Him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ? Howbeit we know this man whence He is: but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence He is. Then cried Jesus in the temple as He taught, saying, Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am: and I am not come of myself, but He that sent me is true, whom ye know not. But I know Him: for I am from Him, and He hath sent me. Then they sought to take Him: but no man laid hands on Him, because His hour was not yet come. And many of the people believed on Him, and said, When Christ cometh, will He do more miracles than these which this man hath done? The Pharisees heard that the people murmured such things concerning Him; and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take Him. Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto Him that sent me. Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come. Then said the Jews among themselves, Whither will He go, that we shall not find Him? will He go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles,

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and teach the Gentiles? What manner of saying is this that he said, Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come?

WHEN our Lord spoke boldly in the midst of the temple, it made the people marvel why the rulers did not interfere, and it made them doubt whether they did not believe Him to be 'the very Christ.' But, on the other hand, the people were under an impression that 'when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence He is.' So that on this ground, as they supposed they knew the parentage of Jesus, they would not allow Him to be the Christ. But 'many of the people believed on Him,' and said, 'When Christ cometh, will He do more miracles than these which this man hath done?' So that they believed, by reason of the marvels which they saw. This made the chief priests and Pharisees determine upon sending officers to take Him by force. But instead of taking Him, according to their orders, they listened in silent conviction whilst He taught the people concerning Himself, that He should shortly ascend unto the Father. 'Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me;' for 'where I am, thither ye cannot come.' Let this always be the view we take of our continuance in this life, and of the change we are to undergo at our death. Only a little while let us reckon we have here to remain; and when we die let us hope to go to Him who sent us hither. A little while only we have for sorrow, but eternity for joy; a little while for want, but eternity for treasure in heaven; a little while for shame, but eternity for the crown of glory, eternity for the fellowship of saints and angels, eternity for the presence of Almighty God.

JOHN, vii. 37-53.

IN the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.) Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet. Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the scripture said, that Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was? So there was a division among the people because of Him. And some of them would have taken Him; but no man laid hands on Him. Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought Him? The officers answered, Never man spake like this man. Then answered them the Pharisees, Are ye also deceived? Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on Him? But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed. Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,) Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth? They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet. And every man went unto his own house.

ON the last or eighth day of the feast, it was the custom to draw water from the pool of Siloam, and to offer it up in the temple with much solemnity, ac-

accompanied with the sound of various voices and instruments. This was done partly in commemoration of the miraculous relief of water produced from the stony rock by Moses, but principally to solicit the blessing of rain for the approaching seed time. It is in allusion to this custom that our Saviour says, 'If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink,' taking occasion, as was usual with Him, to invite them to come to Him as the true fountain. If any of us then fail to obtain this heavenly gift, clearly the fault is our own. Jesus lovingly invites, the promise is largely and surely made, the grace given, which may dispose and enable us to accept the proffered blessing, and if we share it not, this will be the lamentable reason,—because we prefer sin to holiness, the world to Christ, earth to heaven, time to eternity. The answer of the officers is well worthy of observation: they were so affected with the sincerity, authority, and the Divine Spirit with which our Lord spake, that they were convinced He was superior to anything they had ever before witnessed; therefore they could not prevail on themselves to offer Him the least violence. It was the working of God upon their consciences, for the Lord constrained, and even compelled, His enemies to stand in awe of Him and to do Him honour. None must we serve in preference to Him. None must we in preference to Him obey.

JOHN, viii. 1-11.

JESUS went unto the mount of Olives. And early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came unto Him; and He sat down, and taught them. And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto Him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her

in the midst, they say unto Him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest Thou? This they said, tempting Him, that they might have to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down, and with His finger wrote on the ground, as though He heard them not. So when they continued asking Him, He lifted up Himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again He stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had lifted up Himself, and saw none but the woman, He said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.

It was evidently the design of the Scribes and Pharisees to lay a snare for Christ, and they thought they had so laid it, that He must fall into it either way. For if He contradicted Moses by ordering the woman to be released, they would set Him down for a false prophet, and if, with Moses, He sentenced her to death, He must have acted contrary to His character of a merciful Saviour. But while they were clamouring for vengeance against adultery, they forgot that there were such sins as envy, hatred, and malice; and perceived not that they themselves were all the time in the gall of bitterness. The woman had broken one commandment; but these, her accusers, were overturning the foundations of the whole law,—mercy, justice, and truth. So easy is it for men, who are not upon their guard, even while they are exerting themselves against some kinds of sins, to run into others; nor indeed can we

be greatly surprised that they, who give up their whole attention to the concerns of their neighbours, should sometimes a little neglect their own. And when Jesus said unto them, 'He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her,' 'they all went out one by one.' 'And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.' But what were His gracious words? 'Neither do *I* condemn thee,' but I earnestly exhort thee to repent with amendment of life. 'Go, and sin no more.' Never was triumph more complete; these hypocrites were self-convicted, confounded, and disgraced before the multitude. The criminal alone remained to be seen; all her accusers had fled. Let us not then despair; we are in the hands of One who desireth not the death of a sinner; of One who died for our sakes, to procure for us forgiveness, grace, and glory. Let us return to Him, pray to Him, love Him, and serve Him all the remaining days of our lives. Let the remembrance of what is past teach us how bitter are the fruits of sin, and let us learn by experience how sweet are the fruits of righteousness. So shall our brethren receive us as alive from the dead, and angels themselves shall join in celebrating that mercy which has been extended towards us, for 'there is joy in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth' (Luke, xv. 10).

JOHN, viii. 12-32.

THEN spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. The Pharisees therefore said unto Him, Thou bearest record

of Thyself; Thy record is not true. Jesus answered and said unto them, Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go. Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man. And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me. It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me. Then said they unto Him, Where is Thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also. These words spake Jesus in the treasury, as He taught in the temple: and no man laid hands on Him; for His hour was not yet come. Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come. Then said the Jews, Will He kill Himself? because He saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come. And He said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world. I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins. Then said they unto Him, Who art Thou? And Jesus saith unto them, Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning. I have many things to say and to judge of you: but He that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of Him. They understood not that He spake to them of the Father. Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am He, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me I speak these things. And He that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please Him. As He spake these words, many believed on Him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which

believed on Him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed ; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

THIS passage is remarkable as an instance of what is elsewhere stated of our Lord, that 'He taught as one having authority.' And when the Pharisees objected that His record was not true, because He bare record of Himself, He replied that it was true notwithstanding ; for this reason,—that He knew whence He came, and whither He should go. And this means that He knew of Himself that He came from heaven, and that He should return to heaven. For it meant, as He also tells them, something which they were not aware of. 'Ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go.' And hence our Lord goes on to give further answer to the objection of the Jews, that He bare record of Himself, telling them that as, according to their law, the testimony of two men must be received for true, so ought they to receive that testimony in favour of the Gospel in which the Father and the Son were united. But the great and irresistible proof was yet to come when the Son of man was to be lifted up on the cross, which the Jews thought would degrade Him to the lowest infamy ; instead of which it exalted Him to the glory which belonged to Him. Too many who profess to be His people have much in them of the spirit of these disputing and unbelieving Jews ; much of the love of this world in their hearts ; many vain opinions and conceits, which prevent them from a true understanding of the word, and from submitting their minds and hearts to the doctrines and commands of a crucified Saviour. May we then listen to the Gospel with a hearty and full obedience ! The light will not always be shining. Then let us not wilfully live in darkness ; for if death overtake us in darkness, we may wish for the light in vain, we may seek

and not find. 'To day, while it is called to day,' let us 'cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light' (Rom. xiii. 12).

JOHN, viii. 33-47.

THEY answered Him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man : how sayest Thou, Ye shall be made free ? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever : but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. I know that ye are Abraham's seed ; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with my Father : and ye do that which ye have seen with your father. They answered and said unto Him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God : this did not Abraham. Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to Him, We be not born of fornication ; we have one Father, even God. Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me : for I proceeded forth and came from God ; neither came I of myself, but He sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech ? even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own : for he is a liar, and the father of it. And

because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.

FROM this it sufficiently appears how much the Jews gloried in being of the seed of Abraham, and how jealous they were of their freedom; for they here say, We are of the seed of Abraham, of that race who are attached to their liberty, and tenacious of it, and, as far as concerns ourselves, we were never in bondage to any man, though at the very time when they spake this they were subject to the Roman power; but they preserved the appearance of liberty, as they retained their institutions, and were governed by their own laws. Jesus told them, that though they thought themselves free, as being descended from Abraham, and living under the law of Moses, yet Abraham and Moses were merely servants, and therefore their authority was only for a time; whereas the authority of the Son would never have an end. If, therefore, they had submitted to be made free of God's house by the authority of the Son, they would have gained a freedom which they would never have lost. Never let us, like the Jews here censured by our Lord, be unwilling to believe His heavenly words because they contain unwelcome truths. If we fall into the habit of gratifying the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, by walking in the pride of life, in any known and wilful course of evil, we shall never be able to understand, much less to receive and love, the truth as it is in Jesus. Our eyes will be blinded as our hearts are hardened; and Satan will gain his accursed object, even the destruction of our souls. 'Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you' (James, iv. 7, 8).

JOHN, viii. 48-59.

THEN answered the Jews, and said unto Him, Say we not well that Thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil? Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me. And I seek not mine own glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth. Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death. Then said the Jews unto Him, Now we know that Thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and Thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death. Art Thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest Thou Thyself? Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me: of whom ye say, that He is your God: yet ye have not known Him; but I know Him: and if I should say, I know Him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know Him, and keep His saying. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto Him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast Thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am. Then took they up stones to cast at Him: but Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

THESE verses set before us the nature and office of Christ our Lord in a very striking light. Here we have one amongst the many proofs of His existence as a spirit, before He took upon Him our flesh; and from this we infer that He was 'with God, and was God.' Here we see that He was the head of the Church in all ages from

the foundation of the world ; for as Abraham looked forward to His day, to His coming, with holy faith and joy, we cannot doubt that the other fathers of old did the same likewise. *Before* His coming, His holy servants and members of His Church looked forward to the great sacrifice for sin ; *since* His coming, they look back upon it ; all with the same eye of faith, and with the same interest in His spiritual and heavenly kingdom. What a noble view does this open to the redeemed of the Lord ! to think that we are members of the great family of the faithful, of all that ever lived and ever died, and that we hope to join them in heaven, in the church triumphant above. It is an overpowering thought ! And well may it tend to enliven and increase our interest in the kingdom of God, and the Lamb, and lead us to ‘give all diligence, that we may make our calling and election sure ;’ that we may faithfully ‘keep His saying, and never see death ;’ that we may pass from the death of the body to an eternal life of light and glory.

JOHN, ix. 1–12.

AND as Jesus passed by, He saw a man which was blind from his birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind ? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents : but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day : the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. When He had thus spoken, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and

He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam (which is by interpretation, Sent). He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing. The neighbours therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged? Some said, This is he: others said, He is like him: but he said, I am he. Therefore said they unto him, How were thine eyes opened? He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight. Then said they unto him, Where is He? He said, I know not.

THE blindness of the man, whose case is here related, was not intended, as the Jews supposed, for a punishment of sin, either in himself or in his parents, 'but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.' The infinite wisdom of God suffered this man to come into the world in this condition, that Jesus might have an opportunity of working a notable miracle upon him, and of displaying the Divine power, which would confirm His doctrine. Let us then consider all the ills we see, as the result of our common sinfulness. Let us note how they are permitted only for our common good. Let us view them as the trial of our faith and patience, if it please God that we suffer thus ourselves. If it be His will, that we behold rather His visitations in our neighbours, let it stir up in us greater zeal for His honour, and greater concern for their welfare. Let us, like our Lord, give all diligence to work the works of Him that sent us hither. Let us labour to relieve want, to assuage pain, to console sorrow, to help infirmity. Let us overcome the evil that is in the world, with the good that is in the Church. And as 'the night cometh when no man can work,' let us lose

no hour, whilst it is yet to-day, for making to shine 'the light of the world' by the evidence of Christ working in our hearts true affection for all our fellow-creatures. May God make us to rejoice in witnessing a right change in others; may He make us eager to have it wrought, and thankful to have had it wrought within ourselves!

JOHN, ix. 13-23.

THEY brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind. And it was the sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes. Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see. Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because He keepeth not the sabbath day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them. They say unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of Him, that He hath opened thine eyes? He said, He is a prophet. But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight. And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, whom ye say was born blind? how then doth he now see? His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind: but by what means he now seeth, we know not; or who hath opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself. These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that He was

Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue. Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him.

It should be well observed how severe and strict a scrutiny the miracle described in this chapter of the cure of the blind man underwent from the enemies of our Lord. This whole passage, indeed, is deserving of particular attention; the striking simplicity of the narrative, the natural conduct of all the parties, and the close inquiry which the miracle sustained, cannot fail of making a deep impression on every candid mind. The Pharisees were very jealous of any work being done on the Sabbath day, whether good or evil. In many cases it seems as if our Lord had preferred that day for His works of mercy. And in this He probably designed to teach us, that to do good is a fit employment of the Christian Sabbath. But on this account some were unwilling to believe the miracle,—and others doubted whether the miracle had been done. Thus ‘there was a division among them.’ The gainsayers of the truth are often at variance with each other. Would that this were never the case with those who profess to hold the truth and love it! Would that this were never the case amongst those who are members of the same outward visible communion! Much need have we to remember that a house divided against itself cannot stand; that a church so divided cannot prosper. Nor is it otherwise with each single family. In order to prosper in all spiritual things, nothing is more helpful than for all to be of one mind, all united in one work and labour of love, to do all the good we can to each other, and by each other’s help, to all mankind. Let us then speak for each other, and suffer for each other; even as Christ has spoken in our behalf, even as He has borne for us not only risk and suffering, but a most painful death.

JOHN, ix. 24-41.

THEN again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner. He answered and said, Whether He be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see. Then said they to him again, What did He to thee? how opened He thine eyes? He answered them, I have told you already, and ye did not hear: wherefore would ye hear it again? will ye also be His disciples? Then they reviled him, and said, Thou art His disciple; but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from whence He is. The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence He is, and yet He hath opened mine eyes! Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth His will, him He heareth. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, He could do nothing. They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out. Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped Him. And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind. And some of the Pharisees which were with Him heard these words, and said unto Him, Are we blind also?

Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin : but now ye say, We see ; therefore your sin remaineth.

How anxious were the Pharisees to perplex this poor man that had been born blind, and to explain away the miracle of his obtaining his sight ! But the steadfastness with which he declared his belief in Jesus, and the manner in which he proved Him to be the Son of God, may serve as an example to every sincere believer ; and let us be ready, on all occasions, to acknowledge our Lord and Saviour in the face of an unbelieving and ungodly world. Here we have a twofold lesson presented to us : on the one hand, we may observe and admire that teachableness of disposition, that longing desire for instruction, manifested in the poor man who was healed, and we see the happy consequences which ensued ; on the other hand, we behold a determined and obstinate resistance to the truth in the blind Pharisees, and we see the miserable consequences thereof in their hardened unbelief and final condemnation. Let us lay to heart the solemn sentence with which our Lord reproved the whole conduct of the Jewish council in their treatment of this man whose eyes He had opened. As the man in question had been privileged to receive his eyesight, so would many be recovered, by Christ's coming, from spiritual darkness to spiritual light. Whilst on the contrary, many who, like the Pharisees, had all their senses perfect, would, for their pride and obstinacy, be given up to spiritual blindness, and to an incapacity for seeing and knowing what Christ has revealed in the Gospel. Let us, then, who say we see, beware, lest in any matter we shut our eyes against the light ; and to each of us, who declare we believe the word, may the Lord give a willing heart and an obedient ear.

JOHN, x. 1-18.

VERILY, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth ; and the sheep hear his voice : and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him : for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him : for they know not the voice of strangers. This parable spake Jesus unto them : but they understood not what things they were which He spake unto them. Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers : but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door : by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy : I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd : the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth : and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father : and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold : them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice ; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. Therefore doth my

Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

EVERY word spoken by Jesus Christ must be certain truth. Twice does our Lord use the expression of sheepfold in this parable. Let us therefore give to this subject most earnest attention. Let us take more pains than ever both to know and to believe what is here revealed for our instruction. Our Lord applies this parable to Himself in two ways; first, He likens Himself to the door of the sheepfold; and next, to the shepherd of the sheep, as opposed to thieves and robbers. Christ is the way by which alone we can find admission into the kingdom of heaven. Christ is the way of life to Christians. In Christ they must put their trust—in Christ, and in His death. By His Word they must guide their thoughts, and words, and works. How ought we then to listen to His voice, to follow Him, to walk in the ways which He has set before us, to know Him for our Shepherd, and to know ourselves for the sheep of His pasture! And with what interest, and with what thankfulness, must we read our Saviour's words, 'Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold!' We are of those 'other sheep;' we are of the Gentile portion of the flock; we have been mercifully called into the fold, according to the promise of our blessed Lord; we are fulfilling the voice of His word. For each of us the Lord Jesus laid down His precious life: it was a voluntary sacrifice, freely offered in the fulness of His love and power. 'Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all' (Heb. x. 7, 10).

JOHN, x. 19-30.

THERE was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings. And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye Him? Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind? And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch. Then came the Jews round about Him, and said unto Him, How long dost Thou make us to doubt? If Thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one.

THE feast of dedication was instituted by Judas Maccabeus in memory of the restoration of the altar and temple, which had been profaned by Antiochus Epiphanes. It was celebrated on the 25th of the month Cisleu, answering to the beginning of our December, when, as the text expresses it, 'it was winter,' and it seems that in winter it was customary to walk in the porch or colonnade built on the place where that of Solomon had stood, for the purpose of shelter. In our Saviour's reply to the Jews we find an admirable description of the good sheep, of their reward, and of their security against all assaults of the devil or man working against them, while under the providential

care of God and of Christ united. Christ's flock hear His voice by faith. He knows or approves them, and they follow Him, and keep His commandments. In return He gives them eternal life as heirs of salvation, and they shall not perish for ever at the general judgment, if they continue faithful and obedient unto the end ; and no one, not even the devil himself, shall rob Him of them, because He is supported by the Father, with whom He is one. They are one in God. They are One in wisdom, One in greatness, One in goodness. They are One in the settled purpose to save mankind through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ. They are One with each other, and One with the Holy Ghost, which proceedeth from the Father and the Son. Never may we fail to adore these Three in One. Never may we refuse in this, or in any other Divine truth, to hear the voice of the great Shepherd of our souls, to know as we are known of Him, and to follow as He has led the way.

JOHN, x. 31-42.

THEN the Jews took up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father ; for which of those works do ye stone me ? The Jews answered Him, saying, For a good work we stone Thee not ; but for blasphemy ; and because that Thou, being a man, makest Thyself God. Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods ? If He called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken ; say ye of Him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest ; because I said, I am the Son of God ? If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works : that

ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in Him. Therefore they sought again to take Him: but He escaped out of their hand, and went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized; and there He abode. And many resorted unto Him, and said, John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true. And many believed on Him there.

WHEN our Lord had given a true answer to the inquiry of the Jews, they 'took up stones again to stone Him.' But as they opposed the truth by violence, so He met their violence with gentleness and with reasonable remonstrance. It was from the Father, then, that the works of Christ proceeded. And yet it was Christ Himself who showed them, who wrought them among the Jews. He gave proof by His works of His being in the Father, and the Father in Him. Thus He again asserted His Divine nature, when He said, 'If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in Him.' And it must be true in like manner of those good works of ours, which it is our duty to make manifest to all around us. They must be our own doing, but they must be wrought in us by the working of God's Holy Spirit. Unto Him be all the praise and glory. The belief of some, and the unbelief of others, are alike an example to us now. Both parties saw the same works, both heard the same words. But some believed, and others believed not. Where was the difference? In their minds and in their hearts. O Lord, 'to whom, then, shall we go?' Believing or unbelieving, death will find us, and we shall enter upon an everlasting existence. Open Thou our hearts, now while it is time, that we may see the wonders of Thy law, and lay hold on eternal life, as Thy unspeakable gift, through Jesus Christ.

JOHN, xi. 1-16.

NOW a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.) Therefore his sisters sent unto Him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick. When Jesus heard that, He said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. When He had heard therefore that he was sick, He abode two days still in the same place where He was. Then after that saith He to His disciples, Let us go into Judæa again. His disciples say unto Him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone Thee; and goest Thou thither again? Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him. These things said He: and after that He saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. Then said His disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that He had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him. Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow-disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him.

It is observable that this remarkable history of the raising of Lazarus is omitted by the other three Evangelists.

A very probable reason for this omission is, that as Lazarus was living when they wrote their Gospels (for according to received tradition he lived thirty years after he was raised from the dead), they were unwilling to point him out in a particular manner, so as to expose him to the malice of the Jews; and when he was alive the event must have been perfectly well known to all, without the necessity of its being recorded. When, however, St. John wrote, as Lazarus was dead, there was no personal risk to him in recording the event, and it was necessary to do so in order to perpetuate the memory of it to future generations. It seemed strange that when Jesus heard that Lazarus, whom He loved, was sick, He should stay two whole days in the place where He then was. Here we see that this was good for the disciples: it helped to increase their faith. If God gives not, or does not at once what we expect of Him, not only is this consistent with His love for us, but it may also be in furtherance of His designs for the good of our brethren. We must not now expect, as in the case of Lazarus, a return to life in this world; but the dying believer only 'falls asleep in Jesus,' and goes to 'the rest which remaineth for the people of God;' and his body shall be awakened again on the morning of the resurrection, and he shall behold the glory of his Lord. And his sorrowing friends will not 'sorrow as those who have no hope;' their bond of union with him is still unbroken. Thus are their affections purified and borne upward, whither, as they believe, he is gone; there are they trusting soon to rejoice with him in perfect and eternal love. Blessed then be the Name of the Lord, in what He gives, and what He takes away. Let us 'comfort one another with these words.'

JOHN, xi. 17-29.

THEN when Jesus came, He found that he had lain in the grave four days already. Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off: and many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him: but Mary sat still in the house. Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know, that even now, whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee. Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto Him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? She saith unto Him, Yea, Lord: I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world. And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee. As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto Him.

THE mourning of the Jews generally lasted seven days, yet in some cases it was continued for thirty days; during all this time, the friends and relations came to condole with them, which was done with many particular ceremonies. Martha's words betray at once her strength and her infirmity; strength of faith in ascribing so much power to Christ, that His presence could preserve her brother from death; infirmity in supposing the necessity of His presence for that purpose. The Son of God here ascribes to Himself two important attributes: 'I am the

resurrection and the life.' He is both the one and the other with relation to those that believe in Him. He is the resurrection to those believers who are departed hence, and He is the life to those believers who are still upon earth, and He will finally be the resurrection and the life to them both. Here is, in a few words, the summary of the gifts and blessings promised in the Gospel: here is the Author of those blessings, even Jesus Christ; and here is the condition requisite for the obtaining of them, which is called believing, or faith in Christ. The sublimity and majesty of the language which our Saviour here uses is not less remarkable than the great truth which His words convey. He 'being risen from the dead, is become the first-fruits of them that slept;' the earnest of that vast harvest, when all that have been 'sown in corruption shall be raised in incorruption,' and enter upon a state that shall have no end.

JOHN, xi. 30-46.

NOW Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met Him. The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there. Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying unto Him, Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, He groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, and said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto Him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, Behold how He loved him! And some of

them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died? Jesus therefore again groaning in Himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto Him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days. Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe thou shouldest see the glory of God? Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up His eyes, and said, Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard me. And I knew that Thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent me. And when He thus had spoken, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go. Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on Him. But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done.

NOTHING is more natural or innocent than to mourn for the death of a worthy and beloved friend. I will add, that nothing is more commendable than such grief, so long as it is kept within bounds, and free from all impatient murmurs against Providence, and does not lessen the submission and reverence due to God, or make us neglect the offices due to ourselves and others. Jesus Christ condemned not the tears of the sisters of Lazarus; He joined His tears to theirs. His authority is sufficient to decide this question. His example is a rule and a law: and the most conclusive proof that an action is innocent, or even commendable, is to show that He did it. The four

Evangelists have recorded the glorious and miraculous actions of Christ because they were true; they have recorded His human weaknesses and infirmities because they were true also. Instead of desiring to take away the stone, how easy it would have been for our Saviour to cause the stone itself to give way, without employing human hands. But He thought best to give this command, either for the more full conviction of those who were present, or for the exercise of our faith, to teach us to trust in Him under unfavourable appearances. This miracle of the raising of Lazarus is one of the most convincing proofs which Jesus gave, during His whole life, that He was the Son of God. It serves especially to confirm the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, and the truth of His own words, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Let us adore and trust in Him, who was armed with so divine a power as to be able to rescue the prisoners of death, and to recover the trophies of the all-conquering grave. And, as true believers in Him, let us learn to take our part in His triumph with a joyful assurance, that though we purify in the dust, and 'after the skin worms destroy the body,' yet 'in our flesh' we shall at length 'see God.'

JOHN, xi. 47-57.

THEN gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let Him thus alone, all men will believe on Him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people,

and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put Him to death. Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with His disciples. And the Jews' passover was nigh at hand: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the passover, to purify themselves. Then sought they for Jesus, and spake among themselves, as they stood in the temple, What think ye, that He will not come to the feast? Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any man knew where He were, he should shew it, that they might take Him.

FOR the very reason that Jesus gave such striking evidence of His divine power, as was sufficient to draw all men to the faith, these Pharisees ought to have owned Him as the true Messiah; but through the fear of the Romans, and their own perverseness, they were induced rather to cut Him off, and, by this very action, to draw down on their nation the dreadful vengeance executed by the Romans. Such is the usual and the deserved effect of worldly policy, exalting itself against the wisdom and counsel of God. Where men take sinful means to avoid a calamity, that way very often brings it. Caiaphas here spoke in a worldly sense; yet, as he was high priest that year, it was so ordered by God's special providence, that his words, in a sense very different from that which he intended, proved an exact prophecy of what soon came to pass; namely, that Jesus should die for the nation of the

Jews, and not for that nation only, but for all mankind; that He might gather together out of all the nations of the earth the dispersed servants of God, into one holy Church, united under one Head, and joined together in one holy communion. Let us humbly adore the unerring truth, the never-failing providence, and the wonder-working power of the Most High God; and let us heartily embrace that faith, to which even its enemies are compelled to give their testimony and their help. May we ever behold, in this blessed Gospel, 'the power of God, and the wisdom of God;' that the Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, may not be a stumbling-block or offence to any of us, as He was to the proud and worldly-minded Pharisees; but that we may gratefully welcome and receive Him into our hearts, and be found in the number of His chosen and accepted people.

JOHN, xii. 1-19.

THEN Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom He raised from the dead. There they made Him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with Him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. Then saith one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray Him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.

Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this. For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always. Much people of the Jews therefore knew that He was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom He had raised from the dead. But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death; because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away and believed on Jesus. On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm-trees, and went forth to meet Him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord. And Jesus, when He had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written, Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt. These things understood not His disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things unto Him. The people therefore that was with Him when He called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record. For this cause the people also met Him, for that they heard that He had done this miracle. The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after Him.

JESUS had retired from the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, in consequence of the designs formed against Him by the priests and Pharisees. When however the Passover drew nigh, He returned to Bethany, where He found Lazarus and his sisters, and then it was that Mary anointed His feet with spikenard, which was the occasion of exciting the malevolent spirit of Judas to such a degree, that he betrayed his Master. The heart of Judas was alive only to this present world and its gains, and he could not

restrain his murmur of indignation when he made the inquiry, 'Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?' Mary's heart, on the contrary, was bound up with her Saviour, and only alive to any means of honouring Him, at whose feet she had often sat, and received the words of eternal life. May we imitate this blessed Mary, with the love of our Redeemer in our hearts, and ever be ready to honour and serve Him with our hands, with all we are, and all we have. We can but give Him of His own; let Him have it freely and abundantly.

JOHN, xii. 20-36.

AND there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: the same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus. And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour. Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. The people, there-

fore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered : others said, An angel spake to Him. Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes. Now is the judgment of this world : now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This He said, signifying what death He should die. The people answered Him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever : and how sayest Thou, The Son of man must be lifted up ? who is this Son of man ? Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you : for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide Himself from them.

CHRIST had forbidden His apostles to go into the coasts of the Gentiles : on this account the apostles seem to have doubted whether the Greeks who came to worship at the feast of the Passover might be admitted to converse with Him, therefore they consulted Him before they brought them to Him. Jesus told them the time was now approaching, when the power and glory of the Messiah should begin to be manifested not only to the Jews, but also to all the nations of the world. Our Lord was born into the world for this end, to suffer, and to be put to death : He took up His life in order thus to lay it down ; and was made a living man for this very purpose, to be crucified and slain. And when He was lifted up upon the cross, He caused men of all nations to believe on Him. What was needful for our atoning Redeemer, in order that He might bestow upon us the privilege of eternal life, and ‘bring many sons to glory,’ is also destined for us, His followers ; before we enter into that life, we also must die and rise again.

Let us then be content to follow the Lord through suffering and death, so that we may be of the number of His redeemed children, and follow Him to glory. Let us be ready, if required, to give up life itself, so that we may enter His everlasting kingdom. In the meantime we are privileged to pray to our Heavenly Father under all our afflictions and trials for comfort and deliverance; provided we pray as Jesus did; desiring relief only so far as our Father sees it best for us. Thus in all our sorrows we shall be comforted and blessed; and though we hear not a voice from heaven, yet will there be a whisper of peace in our bosom: for 'the Spirit itself (which helpeth our infirmities), will bear witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God' (Rom. viii. 16, 26).

JOHN, xii. 37-50.

BUT though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him: that the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake: Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Esaias, when he saw His glory, and spake of Him. Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on Him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. Jesus cried and said, He that believeth

on me, believeth not on me, but on Him that sent me. And he that seeth me, seeth Him that sent me. I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, He gave me a commandment what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that His commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.

THAT the Jews believed not, is here shown to be a blindness which they brought upon themselves. They could not believe, and why? Because of what Esaias the prophet had said; for his words refer to this very time, to the wilful rejection of Christ by the Jews, and to the judicial blindness they thus brought upon themselves. God foresaw that a very large proportion of the Jews would reject the Gospel, and He was pleased to foretell this among other events relative to the advent and ministry of Christ. It was designed that the fulfilment of these various predictions should form a part of the evidence of the Divine authority of the Gospel. What the prophets had predicted was certain to come to pass; but this certainty by no means caused these events to be determined by the decrees of God. They did not happen because they were foretold, but they were for the wisest purposes foretold, because it was foreseen that they would happen. Many of the chief rulers were inwardly convinced that He was the Messiah. Then what strange infatuation was this! that the human mind should be capable of believing that there

is a God, and yet that they should prefer the creatures before Him, and should imagine the vain breath of popular applause or censure to be of such consequence, that God ought to be offended in order to please man; that all the honours and rewards of His heavenly presence should be lost to secure a little regard from those who will ere long be themselves the objects of everlasting shame and contempt! We should carefully attend to our Saviour's expressions, that those who would not hear His word should be judged by the same word which they rejected. This declaration is made to all to whom the Gospel is preached; and it warns Christians in all ages to make a better use than the Jews did of this Divine light, lest darkness overtake them, and lest the Gospel which is preached to them become the cause of their condemnation.

JOHN, xiii. 1-11.

NOW before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end. And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him; Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God; He riseth from supper, and laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself. After that He poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded. Then cometh He to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto Him, Lord, dost Thou wash

my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith unto Him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto Him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all. For He knew who should betray Him; therefore said He, Ye are not all clean.

JUDAS having now yielded to the temptations of the devil, and the enticement of his own corrupt and covetous inclinations, resolved not only to forsake, but betray his Master. Jesus, knowing sufficiently the dignity of His person, that He was the eternal Son of God, who had come from God the Father, and was now near His time of returning to Him again, humbled Himself by the striking act of condescension related in the ensuing verses, hereby setting us a most powerful example of humility and kindness towards each other. By the ceremony of washing His disciples' feet, our Lord signified the efficacy and value of His own precious blood, by which alone they and all mankind were to have all their sins purged and washed away for ever. How perfect a pattern is here exhibited, not only for our wonder, but also for our imitation! His whole life indeed was a lesson of humility. God grant that it may not be lost upon us; that we may so learn and practise it, as to have a well-grounded hope of our Lord's abiding love. Assailed and tempted we shall be; nor can we, 'by reason of the frailty of our nature, always stand upright.' But if our hearts are with Him, His love will be with us. He will pity our failings; He will condescend to our weaknesses: He will give us the grace of repentance, and raise us from our falls.

‘ Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you ’ (James, iv. 7, 8).

JOHN, xiii. 12–30.

SO after He had washed their feet, and had taken His garments, and was set down again, He said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master, and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them. I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, he that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me. Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am He. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth Him that sent me. When Jesus had thus said, He was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom He spake. Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom He spake. He then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto Him, Lord, who is it? Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when He had dipped the sop, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. And after the

sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly. Now no man at the table knew for what intent He spake this unto him. For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast ; or, that he should give something to the poor. He then having received the sop went immediately out : and it was night.

THE end and life of all our knowledge in religion is to put in practice what we know. It is necessary, indeed, that we should know our duty ; but mere knowledge of it will never bring us to that happiness of which religion designs to make us partakers, if our knowledge have not its due and proper influence on our lives. Nay, so far will our knowledge be from making us happy, if it be separated from the virtues of a good life, that it will prove one of the heaviest aggravations of our misery, and it is as if our Lord had said, If ye know these things, woe will indeed befall you if ye do them not. The Roman custom at meals, which prevailed among the Jews in our Saviour's time, was to lie on couches, supporting themselves on the left elbow, so that the head of one was against the bosom of the person who was next above him, and that was St. John's position when he reclined on the bosom of Jesus. From many circumstances related in the Gospels it appears that there subsisted between our Saviour and St. John a real, sincere, and tender friendship ; and from this we cannot fail to infer that friendship is perfectly consistent with the spirit of the Gospel, and the practice of every duty which it requires at our hands. But what is highly important for us to remember is, that it is in the power of every one of us, though not precisely in the same sense that St. John was, yet in a very significant sense, to be the friend of Christ. We have our Saviour's own words for

it. 'Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you.' Our earthly friends may deceive, may desert us, may be separated from us, may be converted into our bitterest enemies. But our heavenly Friend has declared, and He assuredly may be trusted, that if we adhere faithfully to Him, He will never forsake us.

JOHN, xiii. 31-38.

THEREFORE, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God be glorified in Him, God shall also glorify Him in Himself, and shall straightway glorify Him. Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me : and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come ; so now I say to you. A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another ; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. Simon Peter said unto Him, Lord, whither goest Thou ? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now ; but thou shalt follow me afterwards. Peter said unto Him, Lord, why cannot I follow Thee now ? I will lay down my life for Thy sake. Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake ? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice.

THIS commandment of loving one another was new, because it was generally neglected in the practice of mankind, and because it was for the most part omitted in the lessons of moral teachers of that age ; but the novelty of it consisted more particularly in this, that the disciples

were required to love one another after the manner, and if the frailty of human nature might so aspire, in the degree in which Christ loved them. ‘As I have loved you, that ye also love one another,’ was our Lord’s command. Christians are to adjust their love to one another, to the measure and example of Christ’s love to them. Christ’s love was perfect as the principle from which it flowed, the original benevolence of the Divine character. The example of this perfect love in the life of man was a new example, and the injunction to conform to this new example might well be called a new commandment. Let us then be intent upon the duty which He has left us to perform, and above all upon keeping the new commandment which He has given us to love one another ; without this, indeed, we shall want the evidence of our title in the Christian name. How can we be known as the disciples of the Lord Jesus if our hearts are given to pride, and envy, and anger, and hatred ; if we are living in any uncharitableness ? How can we thus be His disciples, in spirit and in truth ? We shall have no true sign of fellowship to show, either for our own comfort or the satisfaction of those around us. Let us pray for the spirit of love, and show it duly and daily : then we shall be meet for heaven.

JOHN, xiv. 1–14.

LET not your heart be troubled : ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions : if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself ; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas

saith unto Him, Lord, we know not whither Thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know Him, and have seen Him. Philip saith unto Him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it.

HERE our Lord addresses an admirable discourse to His afflicted disciples, breathing consolation and encouragement to trust in God, and in Him also, for protection, support, and final reward. The consolations and promises here held out to the apostles justify the hopes of all Christians who follow their Saviour in meekness and constancy, integrity and piety, though not in the like painful steps which He did, of dying for the testimony of the same truth. The abundance of the reward provided for all such is here illustrated; for those mansions are 'many,' and furnish room for all who make it their care to seek and be qualified for them, however great the number of such may be: also the exquisite nature of the happiness

which will then be attained; since these mansions are in the house of the Father, where is all happiness and perfection, and in whose presence is fulness of joy. It is by Jesus Christ alone that we, ignorant and shortsighted beings, came to the knowledge of God; for without revelation we could never have known Him as He is in His nature and attributes. But, in a still more proper sense, no man cometh to the favour of God but by Christ: He is the propitiation of our sins, and through Him alone we are received into the presence of God, and procure the pardon of our sins, to the purposes of final salvation.

JOHN, xiv. 15-31.

IF ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. Judas saith unto Him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come

unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me. These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe. Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me. But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.

THESE words present to us, in the shortest compass, what the Scriptures in various parts present to us at large; namely,—the three Persons of the Godhead, who concur in the work of man's redemption. Here is the Son interceding, the Father granting, and the Spirit coming, to form the Church, and ever after to sanctify and preserve it. The nature of the love of God, a feeling so often and earnestly inculcated in the Gospel, has sometimes been mistaken by ill-judging Christians. But in the plain word of God we find it described in all its native purity and simplicity. The marks by which it is there distinguished, contain nothing enthusiastic or extravagant, and the chief test by which the Gospel orders us to try and measure our love to God, is the regard we

pay to His commandments. 'Peace I leave with you,' is a Hebrew form of bidding farewell. Jesus adds, I leave my peace with you; not as the world does, by empty or ineffectual wishes, but by a sincere and efficacious blessing. Peace was the best legacy which Jesus could leave to His people; all good and happiness are implied in this word: if the mind and heart are at peace, it is of little matter what there is without, what is in the world around us; and if the mind and heart are not at peace, no worldly circumstances, no wealth or prosperity, no pleasures or honours, can make a man satisfied or happy. God is called 'the God of peace;' the Spirit is called 'the Spirit of love, joy, and peace;' and Jesus is called 'the Lord of peace.' May 'the Lord of peace give us peace always:' let us look to Him, rest in Him, live in Him; and 'the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep our hearts and minds, through Jesus Christ.'

JOHN, xv. 1-11.

I AM the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit He taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the

fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in His love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

OUR Lord now proceeds to instruct the disciples in the principles of their holy faith, and the fruit which must of necessity be produced. He declares Himself to be the only source of spiritual life and nourishment, that there can be no spiritual existence in any man without Him. This He shows by the very apt comparison of a tree, the branches of which live entirely and only upon the trunk and root: the moment they are separated they die. And as the vine was the most common tree in Palestine, Jesus takes His comparison from that; perhaps also because the Church of old was frequently represented under the figure of a vine. We learn from our Saviour's words, that they who profess themselves the disciples of Christ, ought to bear much fruit, by leading holy and obedient lives; that herein God is glorified, and that they and they only, who thus bear much fruit, so as to glorify God, are truly His disciples: which shows how deeply it concerns us all to practise, as well as to profess, that holy religion, which He, our Lord and Master, has taught us. Thus we shall ever be growing in grace; our fruit will increase more and more; the Lord by the dealings of His providence, by the power of His word, by the working of His Spirit, will gradually purge away our earthly affections, our corrupt humours and dispositions, our evil habits, yea, whatsoever offendeth Him:

thus will our prayers be more largely answered, our hearts more fully changed, our graces and virtues multiplied, our heavenly Father glorified in *us*, and we by *Him*.

JOHN, xv. 12-27.

THIS is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. These things I command you, that ye love one another. If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep your's also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not Him that sent me. If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin. He that hateth me, hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had

sin : but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause. But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of me: and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.

OUR blessed Lord here places in the strongest light the love which He bore towards His disciples, and we must imitate that love as far as the vast distance between God and man enables us to do so; and we ought to stir ourselves to mutual charity by that strong obligation to it, which the good will of Christ to us imposes on every considering Christian. We are here expressly told that the Holy Spirit proceedeth from the Father; and as Christ says, 'I will send the Spirit;' and St. Paul tells the Galatians that 'God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into their hearts,' we infer that the Spirit proceeds from the Son also. Indeed, the union between the Father and the Son is such, that we cannot conceive how the Spirit can proceed from the one without at the same time proceeding from the other. The apostles might naturally have been discouraged by the tenour of their Lord's discourse; but these last words must have cheered and refreshed them, by promising a time when all should not dishonour Him, and when there should be some better return of His labour and their's, than contempt and hatred. God will then no longer be the object of enmity and dread, but of love and devotion; and our constant prayer should be, that our whole lives may bear witness to the truth of Christ, and that we may be with Him from the beginning to the end.

JOHN, xvi. 1-16.

THESE things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues; yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you. But now I go my way to Him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest Thou? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you. And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine; therefore said I, that He shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you. A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father.

THE sufferings here spoken of by Christ were to be fulfilled on the disciples, as soon as He should go away from them. But they were so overwhelmed with grief at the prospect of losing their Lord and Master, that they had no wish to inquire why He was thus dealing with them. Their hearts had been set upon His continuing with them upon earth, and enriching them with temporal blessings; and they felt their disappointment and bereavement so strongly as to prevent them from seeking comfort and improvement under it. But our Saviour told them their sorrow would soon be turned into joy, and so will it be with us in our afflictions. If we are righteous and faithful, we shall have joy and comfort in believing, and satisfaction and peace of mind in the whole of our walk with God in Christ Jesus. Though personally removed from us, He is always present in spirit; and in a little while He will appear again, and we shall 'see Him as He is.' In the meantime He will banish all the fears and heal all the sorrows of His people; yea, their sorrow shall not only be followed by seasons of joy, but shall be actually turned into joy. The affliction itself shall be made a blessing, the cloud will drop in fruitful showers of grace and benediction, the cloud itself when dispersed by the Sun of righteousness will be beautified with His glory. And the believer's joy will be lasting, for the world's joy soon turns into sorrow, the world's light into darkness; but the light and joy which Jesus gives, are ever shining and increasing 'more and more unto the perfect day.'

JOHN, xvi. 17-33.

THEN said some of His disciples among themselves
What is this that He saith unto us, A little while

and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father? They said therefore, What is this that He saith, A little while? we cannot tell what He saith. Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask Him, and said unto them, Do ye enquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me? Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you. And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father. At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father. His disciples said unto Him, Lo, now speakest Thou plainly, and speakest no proverb. Now are we sure that Thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask Thee: by this we believe that Thou camest forth from God. Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe? Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall

leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

How reviving was the accomplishment of this promise to our Lord's disciples, when on returning from His empty tomb, they found all their hopes alive again, their faith confirmed, and their courage rendered invincible, in the sight and enjoyment of their Master! But if the continuance of this for forty days could inspire so just a joy, what raptures and transports must all the faithful possess, when they shall attain the end of their faith; when they shall see, and dwell, and converse, and reign with their dear Lord for ever; when their bodies shall be glorified, this veil of flesh and frailty drawn away: when faith and hope shall cease, and be swallowed up in fruition, when they shall be drawn into the likeness of God, and see Him as He is!

Of the joys of the present life we have but a slippery hold; and, were they more substantial than they really are, yet the pleasure in them must be damped by the melancholy prospect that they will one day forsake us, and we know not how soon they may. But the joys promised by our Lord to His faithful followers, as they are true and solid, so are they eternal, without interruption, without conclusion, liable to no decays of nature, no wastings of time; nothing without to destroy them, nothing within to diminish or impair them; subject only to the will of the Almighty Giver, and given by Him never to be taken back. As it is not confined to apostles in this world to have tribulation, so neither is it confined to them to be of good cheer and have peace in tribulation. Many have avowed, that the time of their heaviest earthly sorrow has been the season of their greatest spiritual comfort. God

has so visited and refreshed them, so lightened the darkness of their affliction, that they have forgotten their griefs, and found in His presence the fulness of joy. In the world we may have tribulation; but let us be of good cheer; for He whom we believe has overcome the world.

JOHN, xvii. 1-10.

THESE words spake Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee: as Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him. And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent. I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Thou me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was. I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest me out of the world: Thine they were, and Thou gavest them me; and they have kept Thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever Thou hast given me are of Thee. For I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given me; for they are Thine. And all mine are Thine, and Thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.

OUR blessed Saviour having forewarned His apostles what they were to suffer on account of their preaching the Gospel, and having likewise informed them of the assistance they should receive from the Holy Spirit, concludes with the fervent and affecting prayer contained in this chapter, immediately before He went to the place where He knew that He was to be betrayed and apprehended. Let us pray that this prayer of our Lord may make a due impression upon us; that it may teach us the duty of prayer, and be a means of imparting to us the spirit of prayer. Of our own strength we cannot do this, 'we can do nothing:' and therefore Jesus has taught us to pray, has set us the example of prayer, in this most grand and interesting of all occasions. Let us pray through the Lord of life and glory to the only true God, that He will give unto us that eternal life which He has promised to them that believe; that we may know Him as our God, our reconciled God in Christ Jesus, and when our latter hour approaches, God grant that we may be able to say with humble faith, and a clean conscience, with an unclouded hope, and a satisfied reliance upon the Redeemer's merits, 'I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do,' that so we may hear on the great day the welcome voice of mercy and of peace. 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.'

JOHN, xvii. 11-26.

AND now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. While I was

with them in the world, I kept them in Thy name: those that Thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. And now I come to Thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them Thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth. As Thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me. And the glory which Thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and Thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which Thou hast given me: for Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee: but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith Thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.

LET us here observe that our Saviour not only prays for His apostles, but also for all such as should

believe in Him and should receive their preaching. Hence we perceive how dear the faithful are to Christ, and how anxiously He desires to make them partakers of that glory which He now enjoys. Our blessed High Priest fulfilled all righteousness from the beginning to the end of His sacred function. As Aaron, the first Jewish high priest, was anointed at his consecration, so Christ was consecrated to be the world's High Priest at His baptism, when He was washed in water and anointed with the Holy Spirit descending from heaven, and resting visibly on His head. And as the Jewish high priest on the day of atonement, was required to make annual intercession for himself, for his household, the priests and Levites, and for the whole nation; so our all-sufficient High Priest once for all, on this His great day of atonement, solemnly interceded with God His Father for Himself, that He might be received into glory, His original glory in heaven; and that God would preserve His apostles and disciples in His Name, and in the true religion; giving them a spirit of unity and concord, and protecting them in and from this wicked world, so that finally they might partake of His glory in heaven and also be supported by His love and presence on earth. Grant, Lord, that all we who are called by Thy Name, all we who are baptized into Thy faith, may daily be more and more of one mind, as to what we have to believe and do! Make us One in the holiness of a Christian life, One in the blessedness of a Christian death, and One in beholding after death that glory, and sharing in that love, which was Thine with the Father before the foundation of the world!

JOHN, xviii. 1-14.

WHEN Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth with His disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which He entered, and His disciples. And Judas also, which betrayed Him, knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with His disciples. Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons. Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon Him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered Him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am He. And Judas also, which betrayed Him, stood with them. As soon then as He had said unto them, I am He, they went backward, and fell to the ground. Then asked He them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told you that I am He: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way: that the saying might be fulfilled, which He spake, Of them which Thou gavest me have I lost none. Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it? Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound Him, and led Him away to Annas first; for he was father-in-law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year. Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.

THE name Cedron signifies dark or black, and the brook is thought to have been thus called, either from its

running through a dark shady valley, or from the blackness of its water, caused by its receiving all the drains of the city. It was the brook over which David passed when he fled from Absalom, and is often mentioned in the Old Testament. The garden was the garden of Gethsemane, to which Jesus frequently resorted with His disciples. Here we may observe the love and faithfulness of Jesus to them. He is anxious for their safety, while He gives Himself up to the malice of His enemies; for 'having loved His own, He loved them unto the end.' Whilst our Lord was setting this signal example of meekness, patience, and forbearance, Simon Peter gave way to the passion of the moment, and endeavoured to defend his Master with the sword. Presuming upon his courage and steadfastness, he exposed himself to danger without suspicion or caution, and was thereby soon entangled in the net of his adversary. One of the greatest means of strength is, to be deeply and thoroughly sensible of our own weakness; as St. Paul says, 'When I am weak, then am I strong.' 'Watch and pray.' 'Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.' 'See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.'

JOHN, xviii. 15-27.

AND Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high

priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter. Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not. And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself. The high priest then asked Jesus of His disciples, and of His doctrine. Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said. And when He had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest Thou the high priest so? Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me? Now Annas had sent Him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest. And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also one of His disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not. One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with Him? Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew.

HERE was the completion of Peter's fall; thus his boasting came to nothing, and the word of the Lord came true. The Lord's word did not cause Peter to deny Him; but the Lord foresaw what Peter would do, and foretold it accordingly. And it is a most awful warning against self-conceit and confidence, heedlessness and presumption. He that would stand must be aware of his weakness, and trust in the Lord for strength. Let us pray and strive that our love for Christ may hold out to the end in whatever we undertake for His service. Let us not stay at the door.

And if ever we have been prevailed on so to do, or if in any way we have been overtaken in sin, least of all let us allow ourselves to enjoy at ease the fruit of our iniquity. How greatly did it aggravate the sin of the apostle that his Master, at the very moment of being denied by him, was enduring all the wrongs for his sake! How forcibly is the mention of Christ's sufferings introduced into the account of Peter's transgression! How affecting, how instructive is the contrast between the ease and negligence of the one, and the meekness and fortitude of the other! How much better had it been for Peter to have been sharing the blows which were inflicted on our Lord! How much better must it ever be for us, instead of taking our pleasures with our neighbours, to be taking up our cross with Christ! Never let us be ashamed of His shame; never averse to 'esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted,' but thankful to think, and forward to profess, that He was 'bruised for iniquities,' and that 'with His stripes we are healed.'

JOHN, xviii. 28--40.

THEN led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment-hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover. Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against this man? They answered and said unto him, If He were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered Him up unto thee. Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye Him, and judge Him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to

death : that the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which He spake, signifying what death He should die. Then Pilate entered into the judgment-hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto Him, Art Thou the King of the Jews? Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me? Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered Thee unto me : what hast Thou done? Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world : if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews : but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto Him, Art Thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. Pilate saith unto Him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in Him no fault at all. But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover : will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews? Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.

AS our Saviour was anointed to the offices of Prophet and High Priest, so was He also anointed to that of King. While He was yet on earth, He gave laws unto His Church for the regulation of the lives and actions of those who should become members of it. These laws He established with the royal sanction of rewards and punishments. He settled a ministry for the conduct of His Church under Him. For He rules in the hearts of the faithful by His Spirit. He has already begun to subdue sin, the devil, and death, and He will hereafter utterly destroy them. He now sits in full power at the right hand of God, interceding

for us : and at the end of the world He will descend from thence with glory, to judge mankind, and so put in execution His promises and threatenings by infinitely rewarding those who shall be found to have observed His laws, and by punishing those who shall have broken them. How worthy of the simplicity of His spirit, and how becoming Himself was His answer to Pilate on this occasion ! I have no kingdom, He says, upon earth, but that which is founded on truth. I am to make no conquest otherwise than by convincing the judgments and consciences of men, and gaining them to the belief of sacred truth and a submission to it ; and every one who is disposed to embrace the truth will become a subject of my kingdom. Let us seek it, where alone it can be found, in the word of truth, in the ever-blessed Bible, in Him who is the great Author, and Object, and Teacher of the truth ; the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, who has sealed the truth with His blood.

JOHN, xix. 1-12.

THEN Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged Him. And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on His head, and they put on Him a purple robe, and said, Hail, King of the Jews ! and they smote Him with their hands. Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith to them, Behold, I bring Him forth unto you, that ye may know that I find no fault in Him. Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man ! When the chief priests therefore and officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, Crucify Him, crucify Him. Pilate saith

unto them, Take ye Him, and crucify Him : for I find no fault in Him. The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God. When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid ; and went again into the judgment-hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art Thou ? But Jesus gave him no answer. Then saith Pilate unto Him, Speakest Thou not unto me ? knowest Thou not that I have power to crucify Thee, and have power to release Thee ? Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above : therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin. And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release Him : but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend : whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar.

FROM this it appears that our Lord suffered death according to the Jewish law, as a blasphemer, because, as He avowed Himself to be the Son of God, He was clearly understood to represent Himself as equal with God. This sufficiently proves that the Jews understood the title of 'the Son of God' in the sense of absolute divinity. When Pilate heard what the Jews said, he was the more afraid to crucify Him, not knowing who this person might at last appear to be about whom so many reports were spread, and against whom the Jews argued so inconsistently. Pilate could have had no power over Jesus, unless God had permitted the Jews to accomplish their wicked purpose in delivering Him up for judgment ; and since they were the principals in the crime, therefore they had the greater sin. Let us dwell mournfully upon the afflicting scene. It is indeed 'a time to mourn ;' to mourn especially for the sin which occasioned so much sorrow : to mingle the tear of repentance with the tear of pity, and to be filled with holy love and gratitude to that Divine Saviour who endured so

much for our sakes ; ‘by whose stripes we were healed.’ Yea, Lord, give us the grace to follow Thee with the eye of faith through all Thy sufferings ; and let the remembrance of them be sanctified to our souls.

JOHN, xix. 13-24.

WHEN Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment-seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha. And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour : and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King ! But they cried out, Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King ? The chief priest answered, We have no king but Cæsar. Then delivered he Him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led Him away. And He bearing His cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha : where they crucified Him, and two other with Him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst. And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS. This title then read many of the Jews : for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city : and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin. Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews ; but that He said, I am King of the Jews. Pilate answered, What I have written I have written. Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments, and made four parts, to every

soldier a part; and also His coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did.

THE Jews in order to work upon Pilate had reminded him, that in letting Jesus go he would not be Cæsar's friend; and perhaps they meant to intimate that they themselves should accuse and report him as an enemy to Cæsar. But it is clear that Pilate was worked upon by fear; and delivered Jesus to be crucified against his conscience. He pretended to lay the whole weight, and reproach, and blame of the sin upon the Jews: but he was as guilty before God, as if his own hands had been stained with blood. Now, however, let us turn to the blessed Jesus who thus meekly, patiently, and cheerfully, actually bore His own heavy cross in addition to the burden of sorrows that lay upon Him, and this for our sake. How resolutely and devotedly ought we to bear those lesser burdens which are but *called* crosses, in order that we may follow Him in every path of duty, under every trouble and self-denial, and every difficulty which may be appointed for us in the course of our Christian trial! Behold the Lamb which God provided for an offering! Behold the Sacrifice bound to make atonement for sin! 'The Son of Man came to give His life a ransom for many;' and now the ransom is paid, the redemption accomplished. Let us bow ourselves down lower than the dust; let us grieve, repent, and be thankful. There was no sorrow like unto our Saviour's sorrow, no love like His love. Let us give ourselves wholly to Him, our souls, our love, our life, our all.

JOHN, xix. 25-30.

NOW there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple standing by, whom He loved, He saith unto His mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith He to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home. After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to His mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished: and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost.

THE mother of Jesus stood in speechless sorrow, paying the last sad duty of natural tenderness to her Divine Son, and she now experienced the full accomplishment of Simeon's prediction delivered in the fulness of joy at His nativity,—‘Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul!’ as it must have done with the keenest edge, when she saw Him set up as a sign or spectacle of public ignominy, and heard Him spoken against and blasphemed as a false Christ or prophet. But what a comfort and consolation it must have been to her to witness the strong feeling of affection which Jesus expressed for her, under all the agony of the cross; in the very midst of His sufferings His heart melted with compassion and love for His bereaved parent. Surely this is a lesson and an example to all children. And now the work was done for which Jesus came into the world to suffer

and to die, to be a propitiation, to make our peace, and when we die may we be enabled to say, with humble dependence upon His merits, with holy calmness and composure, with peace, and joy, and triumph, 'It is finished;' and thus with the apostle: 'The time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day' (2 Tim. iv. 6-8).

JOHN, xix. 31-42.

THE Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that He was dead already, they brake not His legs: but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and forthwith came thereout blood and water. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of Him shall not be broken. And again another scripture saith, They shall look on Him whom they pierced. And after this Joseph of Arimathæa, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore,

and took the body of Jesus. And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand.

THE wonderful manner in which so many portions of the ancient Scriptures were fulfilled, in the circumstances attending the death of Jesus, shows that He was the person 'of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write;' they bare witness to Him, as the Son of God, and the Redeemer of mankind; and He proved that they were inspired with a knowledge of the truth from above, that 'holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.' How anxiously does St. John here testify to what took place after the death of Christ: how the soldier pierced His side: how out of it came blood and water: how not a bone of Him was broken! This was chiefly in order to satisfy us that Christ was really dead. We may gather safe instruction from the conduct of Joseph and Nicodemus: let us imitate them in their love and respect for the Lord, and let us avoid the snare into which they fell from the fear of man. Let us confess Him boldly, openly, continually, thankfully; let it be our glory to belong to Him who died to redeem and save us, and 'God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto us, and we unto the world' (Gal. i. 14).

JOHN, xx. 1-10.

THE first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre. Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid Him. Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, and the napkin, that was about His head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed. For as yet they knew not the scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. Then the disciples went away again unto their own home.

JESUS had given up the ghost, and had been taken down from the cross—had been deposited in the tomb—had been shrouded in the stillness of death. His heart-stricken mother and her mournful companions had retired from Calvary and the horrible sight, weeping as they went. All the disciples were scattered and fled; night came on, and the darkness was upon their souls; they were bereaved of their Master, their Friend, and Protector, their only hope and strength: all was dreary and desolate and full of despair; their hopes were all buried in His grave;

the shadows of death had fallen upon them; and they found no comforter. But soon and suddenly there arose a light in the darkness; after the repose of a Sabbath, the morning opened with a dawn of glory: Jesus had left the tomb: He was risen from the dead, triumphant over all enemies, His and theirs: and thus after the 'heaviness which endured for a night joy came in the morning;' and very early on this morning came Mary Magdalene and other women with spices to embalm the body, but when they came to the place the stone was taken away, and they found not the body of the Lord Jesus. Mary probably thought the disciples had removed Him, and went to inquire of them. Peter and John immediately went to see, and found everything as Mary had said, and believed He had been taken away, for they could not then understand the Scripture on this point, though Jesus had so repeatedly declared it. We consider this as strange; but the belief of the resurrection of the body has been made familiar to us, and we should not have had the same just reason to believe it, if the apostles had believed without indisputable evidence and full examination.

JOHN, xx. 11-23.

BUT Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, and seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and

saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing Him to be the gardener, saith unto Him, Sir, if thou have borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto Him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God. Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things unto her. Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when He had so said, He shewed unto them His hands and His side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.

OUR Lord's words to Mary may be considered as relating to His promise that He would not leave us comfortless, and that He would send us another Comforter. Mary's mind was perhaps intent on this when she fell at His feet; on which He said, I must first ascend to my Father before I can bestow upon you these things which I have promised; do not, therefore, now touch me and detain me from any expectation of that kind, but wait rather for my ascension, and go and tell the same things to my brethren for their encouragement. When the disciples

were met together in the Name of their common Lord, to consult for their common safety, the Lord appeared amongst them, thus fulfilling to the very letter His own gracious promise, 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.' And as He had before promised them peace, 'My peace I give unto you,' so now do they find that promise also begun to be fulfilled, for He breathed into them the energy and influence of the Holy Spirit, and He will thus 'raise up His power and come among them, and with great might succour them.' Jesus calls them friends, yea, brethren: His Father is their Father; the God of peace is their God; 'and if God be with them, who shall be against them? For He would have us always consider Himself as 'our Lord and Saviour.' And in so regarding Him we shall be continually reminded, as He would have us, of the love which we owe to Him, and of that which for His sake we ought to feel towards each other.

JOHN, xx. 24-31.

BUT Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe. And after eight days again His disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith He to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust

it into my side : and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto Him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed : blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed. And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book : but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God ; and that believing ye might have life through His name.

THE backwardness of belief in some of the apostles and disciples, added to the evidences afforded of our Lord's resurrection, ministered occasion for several most undeniable proofs. Thus, upon all accounts, the delays and doubtings of the apostles were of the greatest advantage to this doctrine of the resurrection. They gave occasion for more convincing and sensible proofs of it to themselves, and they rendered them more competent and credible attestors of it to others. Let us observe and admire the marvellous love and condescension of our blessed Saviour, who thus stooped to the infirmities of the doubting disciple, and would not give him over to his unbelief, though that unbelief was most unreasonable. He had already convinced the other apostles of His resurrection, and their testimony ought to have convinced Thomas. It is a most unreasonable demand to have the senses satisfied in every article of faith ; and there was sufficient cause to deny Thomas that satisfaction which he requested. Yet, we see, this good Shepherd sought and found His lost and wandering sheep, and by so doing He hath assured us that it is not His will that any of His little ones should perish. The resurrection of our Lord was the accomplishment both of the ancient prophecies and of His own prediction ; a declaration on the part of God, that the great atonement was accepted ; a confirmation of the hopes of His followers,

which renders it impossible to doubt the ultimate completion of His largest promises. We have reason, therefore, to be thankful that, in the first preaching of the Gospel, Providence ordained that a fact of such importance should be accompanied with irresistible evidence.

JOHN, xxi. 1-14.

AFTER these things Jesus shewed Himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise shewed He Himself. There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of His disciples. Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing. But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered Him, No. And He said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea. And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes. As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught. Simon Peter went up,

and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken. Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask Him, Who art Thou? knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise. This is now the third time that Jesus showed Himself to His disciples, after that He was risen from the dead.

OUR Lord here addresses His disciples as His children, and speaks to them with affection and authority, as a Father and a Master giving them cause to suspect that He was no ordinary person, though unknown, and to make them ready to obey His orders. Christ knows all our wants, but He will have us to know and feel them also. The draught of fishes was most seasonable: and would be the means, when sold, of providing food for the apostles during many days. This miracle might also be intended as a significant token and promise of spiritual blessing and success. Jesus had formerly said, 'I will make you fishers of men,' and this might serve to remind them of that promise: and to give them the confident hope of support, both temporal and spiritual, in the course of their ministry and apostleship. In order that we may be the objects of His help and bounty, we must learn to depend upon Him: we must be brought to feel our own need and helplessness; and look for all supplies, both of nature and of grace, to His providing care, and His abundant mercy. We must beg of Him to show us our wants, as well as to relieve them: too apt are we to rest in our own sufficiency and strength: may we practically feel what we readily acknowledge, that without God 'nothing is strong, nothing is holy.' 'Commit thy way unto the Lord: trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass' (Ps. xxxvii. 5).

JOHN, xxi. 15-25.

SO when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith unto Him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because He said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto Him, Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake He, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He saith unto him, Follow me. Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on His breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth Thee? Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me. Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true. And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be

written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.

PETER was grieved at our Lord's threefold repetition of the question 'Lovest thou me?' which looked as if Christ distrusted his sincerity, or foresaw his falling once more from his duty: and therefore his reply was now made with the greatest fervency. But though our Lord here conveyed a rebuke for his denial of his Master three times (which St. Peter could not fail to understand, and to be disquieted and afflicted at), yet he saw plainly that it was not the angry upbraiding of an offended Master, who intended to take a final leave of an old servant, and to employ him no more; but that it was a most gentle indirect reprimand, mixed with much tenderness and kindness, and a sure indication that his fall was forgiven him, and that he was reinstated in full favour and trust, since Christ not only enquired into the sincerity of his love, but laid upon him a threefold command to feed His flock. The enquiry of St. Peter about St. John was perfectly innocent, and there is no reason to suppose that the Lord was angry with him for making it, but He was willing to take this opportunity, according to His custom on other occasions, of inculcating on St. Peter his own duty, and of discouraging needless curiosity about the affairs of other men.

The concluding words of this Gospel are generally considered as a figurative mode of expression, but perhaps they also intimate, that if every one of the actions and words of Jesus had been written, the books would have been so many and so large, as to counteract their own intention, for men would not be able to study or remember them. Let us bless God for all that is written in the Scriptures, and be thankful that they comprehend so much in so small a space. Enough is recorded to direct our

faith and regulate our practice ; more would be unnecessary. Thus end the records of the great transaction of man's redemption, which it was foreseen would be necessary before the foundation of the world ; and the plan of which was discovered to several pious persons in different ages, that they might represent the several circumstances which would attend it, thereby enabling those who should live in the time of its accomplishment to discover who was the true Messiah, for 'these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God ; and that believing ye might have life through His Name.'

THE END.

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